

"In the Latter Days, the sun shall rise from the West"

Holy Prophet Muhammad(Peace and blessings of Allah be on him)



Unity in Diversity

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The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community



Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as)



AHMADIYYA
MUSLIM COMMUNITY

United States of America

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is a religious organization, international in its scope, with branches in 207 countries in Africa, North America, South America, Asia, Australia, and Europe. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was established in 1889 by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as) (1835-1908) in Qadian, a small and remote village in the Punjab province of India. He claimed to be the expected reformer of the latter days, the Awaited One of the world community of religions (The Mahdi and Messiah).

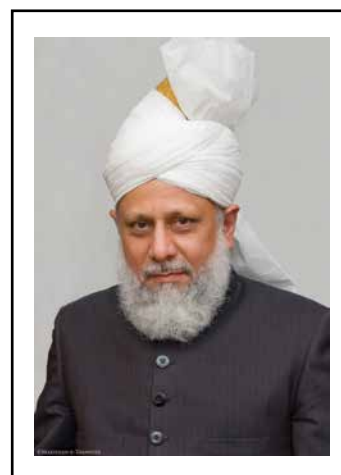
The Movement he started is an embodiment of the benevolent message of Islam – peace, universal brotherhood, and submission to the Will of God – in its pristine purity.

Hazrat Ahmad (as) proclaimed Islam as the religion of man: "The religion of the people of the right path" (98:6). The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was created under divine guidance with the objective to rejuvenate Islamic moral and spiritual values. It encourages interfaith dialogue, diligently defends Islam and tries to correct misunderstandings about Islam in the West. It advocates peace, tolerance, love and understanding among followers of different faiths. It firmly believes in and acts upon the Qura'nic teaching:

"There is no compulsion in religion" (2:257).

It strongly rejects violence and terrorism in any form and for any reason. After the passing of its founder, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has been headed by his elected successors. The present Head of the Community, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, was elected in 2003. His official title is Khalifatul Masih V or Fifth Successor of the Promised Messiah (as).

www.alislam.org
www.muslimsunrise.com



Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad,
Khalifatul Masih V (aba)

The Muslim Sunrise

www.muslimsunrise.com

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Dr. Mufti Muhammad Sadiq (ra) was the first Ahmadiyya Muslim missionary to arrive in America. In 1921, he founded the Muslim Sunrise, which stands today as the longest running Muslim publication in America. The magazine seeks to open discussions on Islam and topics relating to religion in general. It highlights the role of Islam in an ever-changing global society. It provides a platform for public opinion on contemporary issues and presents their solutions from an Islamic perspective.

The Muslim Sunrise welcomes letters to the Editor, Questions and Submissions.

Email us at MuslimSunrise@Ahmadiyya.us or go online to www.MuslimSunrise.com



Acronyms for salutations used in this publication

- sa: Sallallāhu 'Alaihi Wa Sallam (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)
as: 'Alaihis-Salām (may peace be upon him)
ra: Radhi-Allahu 'Anhu/'Anha (may Allah be pleased with him/her)
rh: Rahimahullāhu Ta'ālā (may Allah shower His mercy on him)
aba: Ayyadahullāhu Ta'ālā Bi-Nasrihil-'Azīz (may Allah support him with His mighty help)

Verse numbers in the references from the Holy Qur'ān count Tasmiya at the beginning of a chapter as the first verse.

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Muslims follow the name of God's prophets with the prayer *alaihis salaam* or 'may peace be upon him,' and for the Holy Prophet Muhammad, *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* or 'may peace and blessings of God be upon him.' Companions of prophets and righteous personalities who have passed away are saluted by *radhi-Allaho anhu/a* or 'may Allah be pleased with him/her.' While such salutations sometimes are not set out in the text for readability, we encourage readers to offer these prayers as if set out in full.

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FROM THE HOLY QUR'AN

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ①

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ خَلْقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ
وَاخْتِلَافَ أَلْسِنَتِكُمْ وَالْوَانِكُمْ ٥ إِنَّ
فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِلْعَالِمِينَ ②

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اجْتَنِبُوا كَثِيرًا مِّنَ
الظَّنِّ إِنَّ بَعْضَ الظَّنِّ إِثْمٌ وَلَا
تَجَسَّسُوا وَلَا يَغْتَبِ بَعْضُكُم بَعْضًا
أَيُحِبُّ أَحَدُكُمْ أَن يَأْكُلَ لَحْمَ أَخِيهِ
مَيْتًا فَكَرِهْتُمُوهُ ٥ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ
تَوَّابٌ رَّحِيمٌ ③

In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful.

And among His Signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the diversity of your tongues and colors. In that surely are Signs for those who possess knowledge.

The Holy Qur'an, (30:23)

O ye who believe! avoid most of suspicions; for suspicion in some cases is a sin. And spy not, nor back-bite one another. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his brother who is dead? Certainly you would loathe it. And fear Allah, surely, Allah is Oft-Returning *with compassion and* is Merciful.

The Holy Qur'an, (49:13)

HADITH

SAYINGS OF THE

PROPHET

MUHAMMAD (sa)

Hazrat Anas (ra) relates that the Holy Prophet (sa) said: "A person is not a believer unless he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself."

(Bukhari, Kitabul Aman)

The Holy Prophet (sa) said "All men, whatever nation or tribe they may belong to, and whatever station in life they may hold, are equal. Even as the fingers of the two hands are equal, so are human beings equal to each other. No one has any right any superiority to claim over another. You are brothers." (The Last Sermon of the Prophet Muhammad (sa) delivered on the Ninth Day of Dhul Hijjah, 10 AH (c. 630 AD);

(Sihah Sitta, Tabari, Hisham, Khamis, and Baihaqi)

EDITION

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Each of the three Abrahamic religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, believe in humanity as one family, being children of Adam and Eve. Scientific theories may differ, but still humanity is considered to be a single species, closely related to certain non-human species. Nevertheless, it is incredible to see the diversity that exists among human races: their colors, cultures, languages and faith traditions. Since time immemorial, innumerable and significant efforts have been made to bring about unity and mutual understanding among human races, but sadly, it seems that mankind has a long way to go to achieve that goal.

A few years ago when I came to Houston, Texas, I was amazed to see the diversity of people living in the fourth largest city in the United States. More than 90 different languages are spoken here, and followers of all major world religions – Hindus, Buddhists, Jews, Christians, Muslims, Sikhs, and many others, co-exist without discord or social or religious clashes. Houston is home to Caucasians, African Americans, South Asians, Hispanics, Latinos, Africans, Native Americans, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Japanese – all happily living together in peace. This magnificent spectrum of races, languages and religions living together in harmony offers great hope and encouragement towards the notion that the same can happen in other parts of the world. For this reason, the theme of this edition of the Muslim Sunrise is 'Unity in Diversity'.

Several angles of this theme are considered in this issue, ranging from the paradox of 'Unity in diversity', whether or not global unity is a possibility, whether the United Nations has proved to be a success or failure, to a look into the 'experiment' on freedom of religion that became known as the 'United States of America'. Several articles are included to explore and explain the Islamic perspective on this important theme, from Qur'anic teachings on it, to the condition of the Early Islamic Ummah, a deep contrast to causes of disunity among present day Muslims. Most importantly, we ask "How can Unity in Diversity be achieved through the Khilafat of Ahmadi Muslims, the True Islam?"

In keeping with the afore-mentioned concept of humanity as a unique species, we include a very informative article in the 'Religion and Science' section on "The Biology of our Human Family: who are we related to?" According to a recent single-origin hypothesis, our ancestors originated in Africa some 60,000 years ago, and later, they spread all over the world.

We hope you will enjoy reading and reflecting on this important topic. Please feel free to give us your feedback; it will be much appreciated.

Mubasher Ahmad
Editor-in-Chief



IN THE WORDS OF THE PROMISED MESSIAH^(as)

How Different People can live in Peace!

Notwithstanding the hundreds of differences between us, Muslims and Hindus alike share one thing in common, i.e., we all believe in God, the Creator and Master of the Universe. Also, we belong to the same denomination of God's species and are referred to as humans. Furthermore, as inhabitants of the same country, we are mutual neighbors. This requires that we become friends to each other, with purity of heart and sincerity of intentions. We should dispose kindly to each other and be mutually helpful. In the difficulties pertaining to religious and worldly matters, we should exercise such sympathy towards each other as if we have become the limbs of the same body.

My countrymen, a religion which does not inculcate universal compassion is no religion at all. Similarly, a human being without the faculty of compassion is no human at all. Our God has never discriminated between one people and another. This is illustrated by the fact that all the potentials and capabilities which have been granted to Aryans have also been granted to races inhabiting Arabia, Persia, Syria, China, Japan, Europe, and America. The earth created by God provides a common floor for all people alike, and His sun and moon and many stars are a source of radiance and provide many other benefits to all alike. Likewise, all people benefit from the elements created by Him, such as air, water, fire and earth, and similarly from other products created by Him like grain, fruit, and healthy agents, etc. These attributes of God teach us the lesson that we, too, should behave magnanimously and kindly toward our fellow human beings and should not be petty of heart and illiberal.

Friends! Take it as certain that if either of our two nations would not treat God's attributes with respect and will not shape its conduct in accordance with the conduct of God, then, the nation will soon be wiped out from the face of the earth. Not only will it destroy itself but it will also jeopardize the future of its genera-



Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as)
The Promised Messiah and Mahdi

tions to come. The righteous of all ages have testified that following God's ways works like an elixir for the people. Moreover the survival, both physical and spiritual, of human beings depends on the same eternal truth that man should follow the various attributes of God Who is the Founder of all that is essential for survivor.

A Message of Peace

by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as), (pp 6-7.)



Head of Ahmadiyya Muslim Community makes historic address at Canada's National Parliament

On October 17, 2016, the World Head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, the Fifth Khalifa (Caliph), His Holiness, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad was welcomed to Canada's Houses of Parliament by Prime Minister, Rt Hon. Justin Trudeau, Cabinet Ministers and over 50 MPs and Senators.

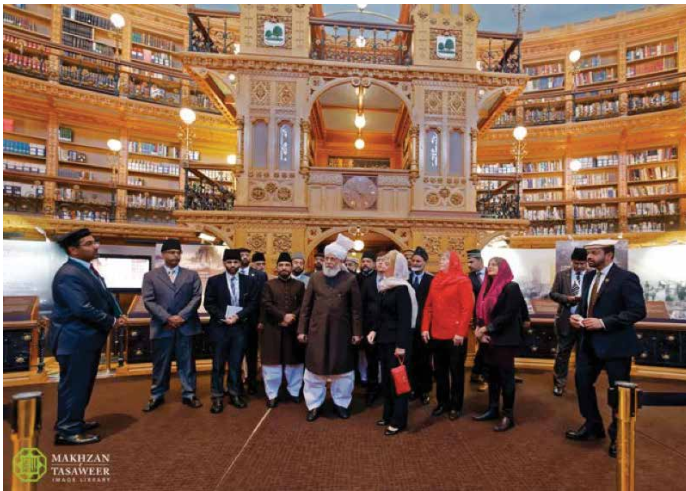
Human Values – the Foundation for a Peaceful World

Later in the day, His Holiness delivered an historic keynote address to an audience of more than 225 people at a special reception held at the Sir John A. Macdonald Building at the Canadian Parliament in Ottawa.

More than 110 guests attended, including over 50 Members of Parliament. The event was also attended by a number of Government Ministers including Hon. Kirsty Duncan, Minister of Science and the official representative of the Prime Minister and Hon. John McCallum, Minister for Integration, Refugees and Citizenship.

Also in attendance were Senators, Members of the Diplomatic Corps, including 11 Ambassadors of State, media representatives, academics, NGO leaders, religious leaders and prominent figures from various other sectors of society.





During his keynote address, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad addressed various issues of global importance, including the risk of a global war, religious freedom, increasing radicalization and extremism and international relations.

His Holiness called on the world's governments to display true justice and equity in all matters. His Holiness also presented Islamic teachings and offered solutions to the world's problems based on the teachings of the Holy Quran.

Reflecting upon the need for unity in society, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad said:

"Irrespective of differences of background, I believe that on the basis of humanity, we are all joined together, and should therefore be united. All people and all organizations, must collectively endeavor to uphold human values, and strive to make the world in which we live, a better and far more harmonious place."



"If human values and human rights are not upheld in one country or region, it has a knock-on effect upon other parts of the world and such wrongdoing can spread further afield. Conversely, if there is goodness, humanity and prosperity in one part of the world, it will have a

positive effect on other societies and other people."

"As a result of modern forms of communication and transport, we are all now much closer together and are no longer confined or bound by geography. Yet, it is a strange and tragic paradox that even though we are more connected than ever before, we are actually growing more distant by the day. It is extremely regrettable, and a source of grief, that instead of uniting and spreading love amongst mankind, the world has paid far greater heed towards spreading hatred, cruelty and injustice."



"Let me reassure all of you that Islam is not what you commonly see or hear portrayed in the media. As far as my knowledge of Islam is concerned, I only know of that Islam whose teachings are based on its name. The literal meaning of the word 'Islam' is peace, love, and harmony and all of its teachings are based upon these noble values."

Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad continued:

"Unfortunately, it cannot be denied that there are some Muslim groups, whose beliefs and actions are in total contrast to Islam's teachings. In complete violation of Islam's fundamental teachings, they are perpetrating the most horrific violence and terrorism in its name."

"The Holy Quran categorically states in chapter 2, verse 257 that 'there should be no compulsion in religion.' What a clear, comprehensive and unequivocal statement that enshrines freedom of thought, freedom of religion and freedom of conscience. Thus, my belief and my teaching, is that every person, in every village, town, city or country has the undisputed right to choose his or her religion and to practice it."

His Holiness said it was a cause of regret that governments in the Muslim world and also some Western Governments had sought to restrict the religious rights of some communities within their nations.

His Holiness said that any attempt to curb religious freedom was dangerous.

Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad said:

"Every individual has the right to peacefully preach and propagate his or her teaching to others. These freedoms ought to be guaranteed as basic human rights, and so legislative assemblies or governments should not unduly involve themselves in such matters."

"It is not wise for governments or parliaments to place restrictions on the basic religious practices or beliefs of people. For example, governments should not concern themselves with what type of clothing a woman chooses to wear. They should not issue decrees stating what a place of worship should look like. If they overreach in this way, it will be a means of restlessness and heightening frustrations amongst their people. Such grievances will continue to exacerbate if they are not checked and ultimately will threaten the peace of society."

Speaking about the role of Government according to Islamic teachings, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad said:

"It is the task of the government and parliamentarians, as guardians of their nations, to legislate in a way that gives rights to their citizens rather than takes their rights away."

His Holiness said that though religious freedom was a principle of vital importance, wherever there was a risk of extremism or incitement to hatred, it was the task of Governments to intervene and take firm action in order to protect their people.

"To be handed the keys to government is a huge trust and so we often see heads of state pledge to serve their nations faithfully and with absolute justice. Sadly, in many cases such honorable pledges prove to be hollow words. In some countries, there are dictatorships or unjust governments, yet the major powers turn a blind eye to their cruelties, because those governments happen to support them and facilitate the procurement of their interests. Yet, in countries where the leaders or governments do not bend to the whim of the major powers, they are quite happy to support rebel elements or to demand regime change. In truth, there is no difference in the way the respective governments are treating their own people. The material difference is only that in some cases the governments cooperate with the major powers, whilst in others they do not without considering the potential consequences".

His Holiness criticized certain Governments for selling weapons to some Muslim nations

He said such weapons often end up in the wrong hands or are used in order to kill innocent civilians.

Citing Saudi Arabia's war in Yemen as a prime example of injustice and reflecting upon its potential consequences, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad said:

"It is well known that Saudi Arabia is using weapons purchased from the West in its war in Yemen, in which thousands of innocent civilians, including women and children, are being killed and so much destruction is being wrought. What will be the ultimate result of such arms trading? The people of Yemen, whose lives and futures are being destroyed, will not only bear hatred and seek revenge from Saudi Arabia but will also bear hate towards Saudi's arms suppliers and the West in general."

Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad continued:

"With no hope or future prospects left, and having witnessed the most horrific brutality, members of their youth will be prone to radicalization and in this way a new vicious cycle of terrorism and extremism will arise. Are such destructive and devastating consequences worth a few billion dollars?"

His Holiness also said that international institutions such as the United Nations needed to ensure fairness and equity between members states.

Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad said:

"If only the major powers and the international institutions, such as the United Nations, had truly acted upon their founding principles, under all circumstances, then we would not have seen the toxic plague of terrorism infect so many parts of the world. We would not have seen the world's peace and security repeatedly undermined and destroyed. And we certainly would not have witnessed the huge refugee crisis, which now confounds and frightens the people of Europe and other developed countries."

"The United Nations must also play its role in establishing peace in the world, unencumbered by politics, injustice or favoritism."

Concluding, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad said:

"I hope and pray that Allah the Almighty enables the United Nations and the world's governments to act in this way so that true and long-lasting peace may be established. The alternative does not bear thinking about, because if we continue as we are then the world is charging madly towards a huge catastrophe in the shape of another world war."

"May Allah grant wisdom to the world's leaders and policy makers so that the world we leave behind for our children and future generations is a world of peace and prosperity."

Teachings of the Holy Qur'an on Unity in Diversity

Shazia Sohail

Harmonious societies are created through acceptance of differences. Islam not only enjoins acceptance of differences but minimizes their significance to the extent that all mankind appears to be uniform in its humanity. With immense emphasis on there being a Single Creator of all human beings, any attempt at judgement of humans based on outward attributes becomes tantamount to criticism of the Creator.

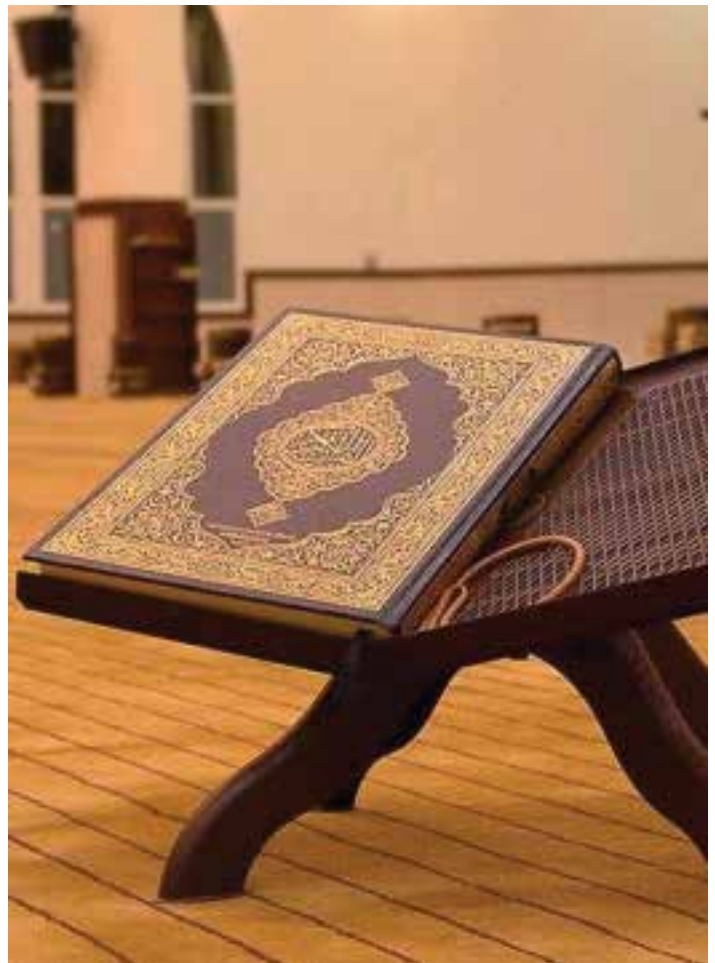
Islam has the distinct quality that it presents the concept of a God who is 'Lord of all the worlds'(1) and a Prophet referred to as 'a mercy for all the peoples' (2) and teachings that are universal in nature, 'neither of the east nor of the west' (3) It clearly promises the highest spiritual rewards to everyone, irrespective of their race, gender, economic status, social status, national affiliation or age: 'And whoso obeys Allah and this Messenger of His shall be among those on whom Allah has bestowed His blessings, namely, the Prophets, the Truthful, the Martyrs, and the Righteous. And excellent companions are these.' (4) Being truly pluralistic, the Qur'an testifies to the divine origin of all religions and promises salvation to true followers of all faiths (5) and enjoins 'Say, 'We believe in Allah and in that which has been revealed to us, and that which was revealed to Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the Tribes, and that which was given to Moses and Jesus and other Prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and to Him we submit.' (6)

The Qur'an states that God created mankind for the sole purpose of worshipping Him. (7) Thus, one may be a man or a woman, a king or a pauper, rich or poor, master or slave, tall or short, black or white, doctor or patient, lawmaker or citizen, belonging to any nationality - it makes no difference: one is answerable to the same God for all one's thoughts and actions. Every situation that one finds oneself in has its own attendant challenges. Everyone is required to make choices that please God Almighty, to the best of their abilities. The Supremely Just God judges us based on our capacities (8) not on the magnitude of output.

To further eradicate superficial differences, the Holy Qur'an repeatedly states, regarding all mankind, that He

has 'produced you from a single soul.' (9) Thus the nature of the soul residing in each and every individual is identical, meaning, every soul experiences human emotions in exactly the same way. Similarly, every soul is impacted by the good or bad actions committed by the body it resides in, in exactly the same way. This assertion of the Qur'an clarifies that the body is merely the home of the soul. Just as we see that human beings living in different kinds of homes are still human beings, similarly souls living in different-looking bodies are all alike.

'O ye people! Fear your Lord, Who created you from a single soul and created therefrom its mate, and from them twain spread many men and women.' (10) The fact that this assertion is repeated numerous times in the Qur'an testifies to its importance. (11)



Racial diversity

The Qur'an frequently addresses mankind as 'O children of Adam' (12) and states that God has made us 'into tribes and sub-tribes' that we 'may recognize one another,' that 'the most honorable' among us in the sight of Allah, is he who is the most righteous' (13) among us and that forgiveness and honor belongs to 'those who believe and do good works.' (14)

Gender diversity

Wherever the Qur'an makes statements like 'whoso does good works, whether male or female, and is a believer, such shall enter heaven' (15) it points to the unity of purpose behind the creation of genders. While some differences exist in the roles and responsibilities of men and women, these are merely the means to please God and are to be embraced willingly and enthusiastically to gain nearness to God Almighty. They are certainly not a reflection on one's spiritual status, as is evident from: "Surely the men who submit and the women who submit, and the believing men and the believing women, and the obedient men and the obedient women, and the truthful men and the truthful women, and the humble men and the humble women, and the almsgiving men and the almsgiving women, and the fasting men and the fasting women, and the men who guard their chastity and the women who guard their chastity, and the men who praise God and the women who praise God, Allah has prepared for all of them forgiveness and a mighty reward." (16)

Economic and Social diversity

Theodore Roosevelt said, "The death-knell of the republic had rung as soon as the active power became lodged in the hands of those who sought not to do justice to all citizens, rich and poor alike, but to stand for one special class and for its interests as opposed to the interests of others." (17)

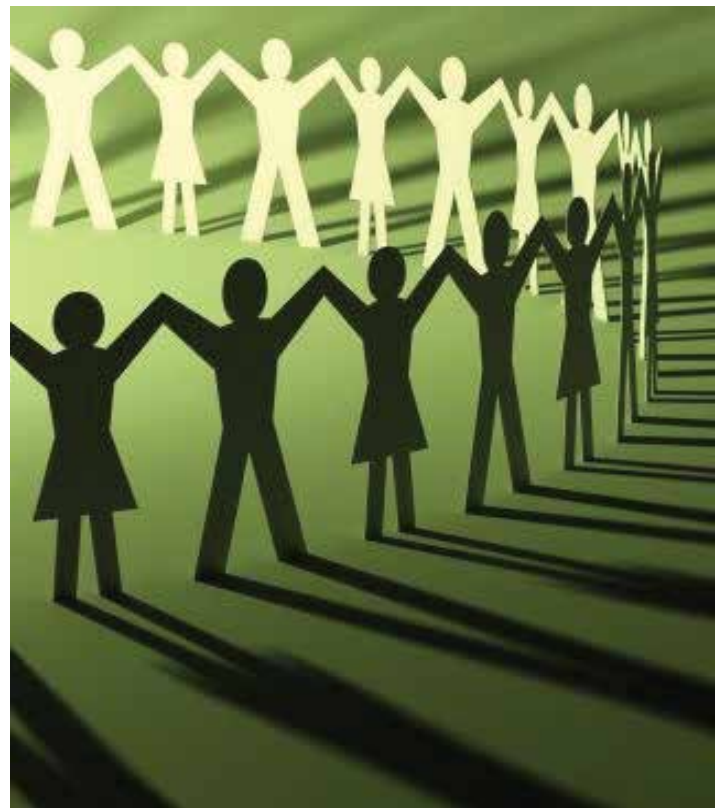
The Holy Qur'an recognizes the dire consequences of discrimination in these words: "O ye who believe! Be strict in observing justice, and be witnesses for Allah, even though it be against yourselves or against parents and kindred. Whether he be rich or poor, Allah is more regardful of them both than you are." (18)

Another verse of the Holy Qur'an that refutes the importance of outward appearance is, "We have indeed sent down to you raiment to cover your shame, and to be an elegant dress; but the raiment of righteousness — that is the best." (19)

The Holy Prophet (sa) said, "The poor will enter paradise half a millennium sooner than the rich." (20)

The Holy Prophet (sa) received the gift of Zaid bin Harith (ra) as a slave from his wife Khadijah (ra). The Holy Prophet (sa) freed Zaid (ra), but Zaid opted to stay with him. It so happened that a little while later, Zaid's (ra) parents tracked him down and offered to buy his freedom. Zaid (ra) respectfully declined to return home with his parents and again preferred to stay with the Holy Prophet (sa); upon this the Holy Prophet (sa) announced: "I free Zaid and make him my son. He shall be my heir and I shall be his." (21) Zaid (ra) later married Zainab (ra), the first cousin of the Holy Prophet (sa). The marriage did not last, and after their divorce, the Holy Prophet (sa) himself married Zainab. Thus the social taboo of marrying a former slave to a free woman of exalted social status was broken through Zaid's marriage, and the taboos of marrying the divorcee of a former slave and adopted son were broken through the marriage of the Holy Prophet (sa) to Zainab. Furthermore, out of all the Companions of the Holy Prophet (sa), Zaid is the only one whose name has been mentioned in the Holy Qur'an. (22)

In keeping with the fact that righteousness is to be preferred over all other worldly attributes, the Qur'an states: "And marry not idolatrous women until they believe; even a believing bond-woman is better than an idolatress, although she may highly please you. And give not believing women in marriage to idolaters until they believe; even a believing slave is better than an idolater, although he may highly please you." (23)





National diversity

The world has seen the rise and fall of great nations such as the Persians, the Greeks, the Romans, the Ottomans, and so on. Currently, the United States of America is referred to as 'the greatest nation on earth.' As per the Holy Qur'an, Allah does not discriminate among nations: "Allah is Munificent to all peoples." (24) The Qur'anic injunction in regard to national differences is: "And if Allah had enforced His will, He would have made you all one people, but He wishes to try you by that which He has given you. Vie, then, with one another in good works. To Allah shall you all return; then will He inform you of that wherein you differed." (25)

The Qur'an also states that Allah sent many messengers whose names have not been revealed (26) so it would be erroneous to believe that He sent Prophets only to the Israelites or to the Arabs.

Age diversity

Islam lays great emphasis on taking care of the elderly: "Thy Lord has commanded, Worship none but Him, and show kindness to parents. If one of them or both of them attain old age with thee, never say unto them any word expressive of disgust nor reproach them, but address them with excellent speech. And lower to them the wing of humility out of tenderness. And say, My Lord, have mercy on them even as they nourished me in my childhood." (27)

When it comes to division of inheritance, parents have a right to inherit from their children. In this regard the Qur'an says, "Your fathers and your children, you know not which of them is nearest to you in benefit." (28)

Religious diversity

Freedom of conscience and religion is recognized by all civilized societies as being the most sacred and inviolable human right. The Qur'an states unequivocally: "There is no compulsion in religion" (29) The Holy Qur'an goes so far as to testify to the divine origin of all religions: Say ye: We believe in Allah and what has been revealed to us, and what was revealed to Abraham and Ishmael, and Isaac, and Jacob and his children, and what was given to Moses and Jesus, and what was given to all other Prophets from their Lord. We make no difference between any of them; and to Him we submit ourselves." (30)

Conclusion

According to the Holy Qur'an, the reward for believing and for engaging in good works, is God Himself. As with any other venture, it is not possible to attain great merit without overcoming extremely difficult challenges. In the spiritual realm, anything that takes us away from unity and recognition of our common humanity constitutes a hurdle between us and God. The multiplicity of diversity can easily lull us into seeking the comfort of the familiar and ignoring the troubles of the "other". However, if one takes the Holy Qur'an as one's daily guide, one would come to see the world as a garden with flowers of varying hues and fragrance, manifesting various attributes of the most Gracious and Merciful Creator.

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Unity in Diversity in Early Islamic Ummah

Bushra Bajwa

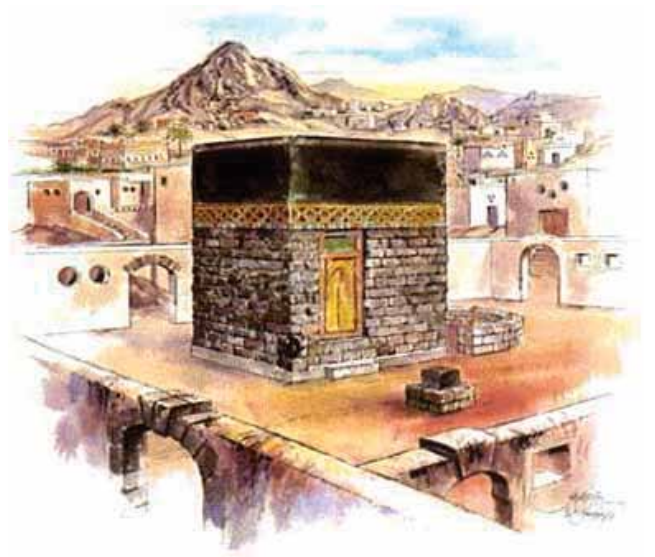
"You are brothers and sisters. You are all equal. No matter to which nation or tribe you belong and no matter what your status is, you are equal. Just as the fingers of both hands are alike, nobody can claim to have any distinctive right or greatness over another. The command which I give you today is not just for today but it is forever."⁽¹⁾

The Holy Prophet Muhammad's (sa) message was for all mankind and for all times. He taught Muslims to cultivate a feeling of brotherhood and tolerance towards their fellow beings and to erase any prejudices they held based on race, color, or any other. The early Muslims, right from the outset of Islam, were shining examples of the unity and love for fellow beings that their Prophet set out to establish.

Diversity of the Early Believers

When Prophet Muhammad (sa) made his claim to prophethood, the first to believe him were, his loyal and wealthy wife Khadijah (ra), his friend, Abu Bakr (ra) a wise and highly respected person in Mecca, his eleven-year-old cousin, Ali (ra) and Zaid (ra), the Prophet's (sa) freed slave. As more people came into the fold of Islam, Arabs witnessed sons who became Muslims while their fathers did not, sisters who became Muslims while their brothers did not, and slaves who became Muslims while their masters did not. Such was the universality of Islam, that even though the families of the believers rejected Islam, as did the Prophet's own family, a diverse group of believers was formed and their unity was based on love and devotion for the Prophet (sa) and the teachings of Islam.

Different Muslims brought different strengths and qualities to the group of early Muslims. Hazrat Abu Bakr (ra), a businessman and friend of the Prophet Muhammad (sa), used his wealth to free many of the slaves who had become Muslims and were enduring hardship from their masters. Hazrat Umar (ra) was a strong, fearless and influential man in Mecca. When he accepted Islam, Muslims, who previously used to hide, came out and worshipped God openly. Hazrat Abu Bakr (ra) and Hazrat Umar (ra) were the Prophet's (sa) closest companions and counsels. The Prophet (sa) would often turn to them for advice about different matters. Hazrat Abu Bakr (ra) took a more lenient view on matters while Hazrat Umar (ra) took the sterner view. At times, the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa), with added guidance from God, would go with Hazrat Abu



Bakr's advice, and at other times he would take Hazrat Umar's advice, exhibiting that different situations required different actions. Later on, in their caliphates too, Hazrat Abu Bakr (ra) and Hazrat Umar (ra) ruled by these principles, demonstrating that there are diverse ways to be a good leader.

When Hazrat Khadija (ra) married the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa), she gave him all her wealth and slaves (whom he freed). She comforted the Prophet (sa), while the world rejected him. Despite having been one of the richest women in Mecca, she spent the last three years of her life in the desert with little food and other basic provisions as Muslims were boycotted by the Meccans. She stood shoulder to shoulder with the Holy Prophet (sa) and the other Muslims, and was an inspiration to others showing that sacrifice and devotion for the cause of Islam were of greater importance than the riches and luxuries of this world.

Hazrat Aisha (ra) was only fifteen years of age when she married the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa) and survived him by 40 years. She contributed greatly in educating women about the teachings of Islam. Her extraordinary memory allowed her to recall the words of Prophet Muhammad (sa) and report about his daily life after his death. On account of her superior knowledge and understanding of faith, leading companions of the Prophet (sa) would turn to Hazrat Aisha (ra) to overcome any intellectual difficulty.

Unity Among the Believers

The battles fought in the early days of Islam demonstrated unity amongst the Muslims and the devotion they showed towards the cause of Islam, despite their diverse backgrounds. In the "Battle of Badr", 313 unskilled, inexperienced and ill-armed Muslims, mostly on foot, defeated an army of 1000 seasoned Arab soldiers skilled in war. Before the battle, the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa) made sure that those who took part in the war did so out of their own will and desire. When the word got out to the Muslims about the size and strength of the Arab army, the Prophet (sa) sought counsel from his followers. As each Meccan Muslim assured the Holy Prophet (sa) of their zeal and determination to fight, he would insist on more and more counsel, until eventually one of the Medinite Muslims asked the Prophet (sa) if he was awaiting the counsel of the Muslims of Medina. When the Holy Prophet (sa) answered in the affirmative, the Medinite Muslim replied, "We will fight to the right of you, to the left of you, in front of you and behind you. True, the enemy wants to get at you. But we assure you that he will not do so, without stepping over our dead bodies. Prophet of God, you invite us to fight. We are prepared to do more. Not far from here is the sea. If you command us to jump into it, we will hesitate not."² It didn't matter if a Muslim was from Mecca or from Medina, all dedicated Muslims stood in unison with the Prophet (sa) for the battle.

The determination and courage of the Muslims at Badr proved to be more powerful than any skill or equipment for war that the non-believers possessed. When the battle began, Abdur Rehman Bin Auf, one of the few generals in the Muslim force, found himself centered between two boys. As he pondered over his situation, the two boys asked him who was Abu Jahl in the Meccan army, who used to harass the Holy Prophet (sa) in Mecca? Abdur Rehman pointed to Abu Jahl in the enemy ranks, well-equipped and positioned between two senior army generals. The boys charged straight for Abu Jahl and despite one of them losing an arm in the attack, they continued to attack Abu Jahl until he fell to the ground, mortally wounded. These boys, were young, inexperienced in warfare and were from Medina. Yet they had been agitated by the cruel persecution that they heard the Prophet Muhammad (sa) had faced in Mecca. Their extreme bravery and fortitude are evidence of the devoutness and unity that even the young showed towards the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa).

The Holy Prophet's (sa) Respect for Diversity

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa) greatly emphasized tolerance for others who were different from one's self and taught that all men were equal, regardless of color, race or language. He said that, "Neither an Arab has superiority



Battleground of Uhud - Jabal Rooma

over a non-Arab, nor a non-Arab over an Arab. A white person is not superior to a black person, nor a black is superior to a white. The most honorable among you in the sight of God is the one who is the most righteous."³ There are many incidents from the Prophet's (sa) life where he demonstrated forbearance and respect for diverse people.

Once, a funeral was passing by the Holy Prophet (sa) and he stood up in respect for it. A Muslim asked him why he was standing up for the funeral of a Jewish person. He replied, "Was he not a soul?"⁴ After this, Muslims showed great respect for the funerals of people of other faiths. The Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa) also allowed a Christian delegation to hold their worship and service in his mosque, showing how he respected the beliefs of people of other faiths.



In Mecca, many of the earlier Muslims were slaves and the poor. However, Islam put all men on an equal level and promoted the freedom of slavery. Later in Medina, the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa) gave Hazrat Bilal (ra), previously a slave who was harshly persecuted by his master in Mecca, the honor of being the muezzin (the one who calls people to prayer) in his mosque. Before the Holy Prophet's (sa) pronouncements, it was unimaginable to give such respect to an African.

At the time of the "Battle of the Ditch", the Prophet (sa) sought counsel from his followers on how the Muslims should prepare for the enemy attack. Among those who were consulted, was Salman Farsi (ra), the first Muslim from Persia. Salman (ra) informed the Prophet (sa) that in his country, when a small town was to be attacked by a large army, they would dig a ditch around the town and defend from the inside. This incident is an example of the strength that diversity can bring to a group; that is, we can learn new things from others with different backgrounds and experiences than ourselves.

Through his marriages, the Holy Prophet (sa) eradicated racial and cultural distinctions and prejudices about marriage. He married divorced and widowed women who at that time were looked down upon as inferior in status. By marrying such women he set an example that divorced and widowed women should be offered support and care and given an honorable status in society. He also married Mary the Copt, from Egypt and due to this tie of kinship, he taught the Arabs to be fair

and kind towards the people of Egypt and Africa.

Once the Holy Prophet (sa) was engaged in a conversation with some Quraish chiefs when Abd Allah Ibn Umm Maktum, a blind man came up to him and started to interrupt the conversation by asking the Prophet (sa) some questions. The Prophet (sa) did not like this interference but his only response was to turn away from Abd Allah (an act he could not see). This incident, which has been mentioned in the Qur'an, shows that the Prophet (sa) was careful not to reproach or rebuke Abd Allah, and thus injure his self-respect.⁽⁵⁾ This is a fine example how the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa) regarded the tender sensitivities of the poor and weak.

Conclusion

The Holy Prophet (sa) was a shining example of showing respect and tolerance for all and he set the perfect model for all stages of human experience. The universal teachings of Islam, which he preached, promoted a universal human culture and equality of all mankind, based on the unity of God. The early Muslims were a group of diverse people of different status, education, family, and financial backgrounds. Their spirit of sacrifice and utmost love for God and His Prophet (sa) unified them. According to the teachings of Islam, the only thing that distinguishes believers from each other, in the sight of God, is their level of piety.

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Khalifa of Ahmadi Muslims The Only Means of Unifying a Diverse Human Race

Anser Ahmad, Esq.

Introduction

Our solar system is a perfect example of diversity. Each planet is so diverse, with differing sizes, compositions, and orbits. Yet each planet functions in conjunction with other planets revolving around a single star, the sun. The sun with its gravitational pull, unifies all of the planets into one perfectly balanced solar system. Therefore, while there exists diversity, there is also unity. In the Holy Qur'an, we read, "Have they not looked at the sky above them, how We have made it and adorned it, and there are no flaws in it?" (1) The solar system, as created by God Almighty, gives us reason to reflect, on how diversity can work in unison for a single purpose.

Importance of Diversity

Similarly, in nature we witness countless examples of symbiosis. Where creatures of different species work with one another for the benefit of both species. This is true from bacteria to insects to the animal kingdom. From bees, in the way they communicate with one another to serve the Queen bee, to ants that work in unison, to birds that fly in perfect symmetry behind a single leader, we see countless examples of the success that is possible through unity. "There is not an animal that crawls in the earth, nor a bird that flies on its two wings, but they are communities like you. We have left out nothing in the Book. Then to their Lord shall they be gathered together." (2) Similarly, the human body contains hundreds of types of cells, tissues, organs all working in unison to serve and obey the commands of the brain.

Just as nature is replete with examples of diversity working towards a unified goal, we see that humans, when originating from different backgrounds strengthen the community. Indeed, according to Allah, the purpose of creating such a vast array of humans was to work together. We read in the Holy Qur'an: "O mankind, We have created you from a male and a female; and We have made you into tribes and sub-tribes that you may recognize one another. Verily, the most honorable among you, in the sight of Allah, is he who is the most righteous among you." (3)

The Holy Qur'an specifies that the purpose of a diverse human population is not to live in isolation, but to "recognize one another," and hence to work together. In the social sciences, a growing body of research shows that

diversity in groups actually assists in the group as a whole's ability to solve problems.

Dr. Jo Handelsman, working under the White House STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) program states, "Diversity on campuses enhances students' advanced thinking and leadership skills; and that diversity in companies improves innovation and strengthens the bottom line. When teams of physicists tackle the mysteries of the universe, for example, they harness the collective wisdom of dozens of nationalities to find creative solutions to their problems. And cracking the genetic code was an international effort of scientists both in cooperation and competition with one another. It's clear that adding greater diversity of thought to working teams can lead to important new insights." (4)

However, while diversity in the scientific arena has led to great achievements, diversity in other areas of human life has proven to be more challenging, and in fact, catastrophic. Even today, after being in existence for over 4000 years, humans have failed to find means of co-existing with other races, cultures, or nations. The number of conflicts between countries, tribes, and races (even in the United States) has increased exponentially. Therefore, while humans boast of diversity, practically we have been unable to find a means to live at peace with each other. This begs the question: what good is diversity in the human species if there is no unity, no guided plan to fulfill a higher purpose?

Only Through Islam Can Mankind Be United

While the pundits claim that religion is the cause of much of the strife in the world, this is a simplistic, broad-brush answer to the cause of the world's conflicts. Throughout history, any conflict commenced in the name of religion has inevitably had a political or personal agenda. Never has there been a religious war, based solely on genuine religious precepts. While religion is mostly blamed for the world's conflicts, ironically, it is religion, one based on purely spiritual principles, which offers the only lasting solution to peace among nations.

An example of diversity working in a unified manner is at the time of Hajj, the annual pilgrimage to Mecca, undertaken by millions of Muslims from all parts of the world. Perhaps the best way to describe this eye-opening event,

from the perspective of diversity working in unison, is through the eyes of a Muslim who, throughout his life had himself spawned much hatred for people of other races and colors.



Malcolm X with the King of Saudi Arabia.

In April 1964, Malcolm X, a former member of the Nation of Islam, undertook the pilgrimage to Mecca, and immediately upon arriving was shocked at what he witnessed:

"Never have I witnessed such sincere hospitality and overwhelming spirit of true brotherhood as is practiced by people of all colors and races here in this ancient Holy Land, the home of Abraham, Muhammad and all the other Prophets of the Holy Scriptures. For the past week, I have been utterly speechless and spellbound by the graciousness I see displayed all around me by people of all colors.

There were tens of thousands of pilgrims, from all over the world. They were of all colors, from blue-eyed blondes to black-skinned Africans. But we were all participating in the same ritual, displaying a spirit of unity and brotherhood that my experiences in America had led me to believe never could exist between the white and non-white.

America needs to understand Islam, because this is the one religion that erases from its society the race problem...I could see from this, that perhaps if white Americans could accept the Oneness of God, then perhaps, too, they could accept in reality the Oneness of

Man - and cease to measure, and hinder, and harm others in terms of their 'differences' in color." (5)

This reflection by an individual, who himself had promoted hatred towards whites based on his experiences in America, summarizes the level of diversity of people of all races during the pilgrimage to Hajj. This example of diversity at the highest levels shows that humans when fulfilling a higher purpose of worshipping one God, can be unified also. Yet, we see that even in the Islamic world, conflicts continue, as nation battles nation, and even sects within Islam spew hatred and animosity towards Muslims of other sects.

The only solution, in such a diverse world is leadership. Yet the Muslim world shuns any notion of a single head, or a Caliph, claiming that this falls against the precepts of Islam, as the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa) was the last Prophet, and there can be no new law-bearing Prophet after him. Yet the concept of successors, or "Khulafa" commenced immediately after the death of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa), when four Khulafa were elected one after the other. The majority of the Muslim world accepts these elected successors, and refers to them as "Khilafat Rashida" or the rightly guided Caliphs.

Islam Without Leadership: Why an Ahmadi Muslim Khalifa is the Only Solution for a New World Order

It is a fact, that apart from such an institution (of Khilafat) there is no other system in the world that can guarantee unity. We are aware of how the entire Muslim community (Ummah) began to splinter after the Muslims lost the institution of the "Rightly guided Khilafat" which had commenced after the death of the Holy Prophet (sa) of Islam. Had the Muslims remained unified, Islam would have continued to spread throughout the world.

Once those early Muslims lost Khilafat, they continued to break up into pieces and became scattered. The covenant with God that is established through a law-bearing prophet, does not involve the mere acceptance of the Prophet. Rather, it involves abiding by the law revealed to him. In the Holy Qur'an, we read,

"And hold fast, all together, by the rope of Allah and be not divided; and remember the favor of Allah which He bestowed upon you when you were enemies and He united your hearts in love, so that by His grace you became as brothers; and you were on the brink of a pit of fire and He saved you from it. Thus does Allah explain to you His commandments that you may be guided." (6)

Therefore, after the death of a prophet, according to the Holy Qur'an, each person cannot hold on individually to the rope of Allah. To the contrary, Allah instructs us, that "you must hold on to the rope of Allah, all together" or collectively. Logically there is no other way to hold together collectively except through Khilafat.

Without Khilafat, unity cannot be attained. In the verse cited above, it is stated, "you were on a brink of fire." This does not necessarily mean "fire of hell" it can also mean the "fire of war." The fundamental cause of wars among nations of the world is discord and division. God promises that if we are truly Muslims and hold the "hablellah" (rope of Allah) collectively, it is inconceivable that we will fight with one another. Khilafat is the binding force that brings peoples of all races, colors, nations, together under one set of guidelines. Unity of the Muslim Ummah, and mankind as a whole, can only be attained through a single central, non-sectarian spiritual leader.

In the world today, there is only one religious community, which is affiliated with the rope of Khilafat, instituted by Allah the Exalted, one which unites all people under a covenant of loyalty with the Holy Prophet (sa) of Islam. Those are the followers of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community. It is only through this community and its Khalifa, can the world witness the change it is so desperately seeking through its political leaders.

In this respect, the second Khalifa of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community, Hazrat Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmood Ahmad (ra), soon after the Second World War, stated, "I assure you that the New World Order will not be inaugurated by Mr. Churchill or Mr. Roosevelt. Declarations like the Atlantic Charter will accomplish nothing. They are full of shortcomings. New Orders are always established in the world by Prophets, who are raised for this purpose by God. They have no bitterness against the rich and no bias for the poor. They are neither of the East nor of the West. They are the Messengers of God and they proclaim the teachings which furnish the foundations of true peace. Today also peace will be established only through the teachings of the Promised Messiah (as)...Under this system, not by means of compulsion or coercion, but out of real affection and goodwill, a brother will be eager to help his brother. Nor will such sacrifice be in vain. Every giver will be recompensed many times over by God. The rich will not suffer loss nor will the poor suffer privation. Nation will not fight nation, nor will class contend against class. The world seeks a New Order by destroy-

ing religion...[we] will construct a much better New Order while preserving the integrity of religion." (7)



Second Khalifa of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community, Hazrat Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmood Ahmad (ra)

Ahmadiyya Muslim Khilafat utilizes diversity in its members as a means of strengthening the community given that the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is present in over 120 countries, with members of all races and cultures, we see a perfect example of diversity working in unity. An example of the diversity witnessed at the time of Hajj, the international convention of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community is a model of how diversity in brotherhood leads to greater unity of the community, where members of countries all over the world gather together for only one purpose: to become uplifted by each attendee love for the Creator, and the message of His Prophet Muhammad (sa).

It is only to reach the higher spiritual stations, to re-invigorate themselves that Ahmadi Muslims gather from all over the world to experience the blessings that come with Khilafat. Once a year, Ahmadi Muslims

gather in the United Kingdom, to be close to the Khalifa, to figuratively hold the rope of Allah, a rope strengthened by the beautiful colors, cultures, and people which comprise the attendees at the annual convention.

Aside from the annual convention, the Khalifa's weekly Friday sermon is broadcast live internationally to every continent and almost every country. This again serves as a living example of how unity can exist through diversity. The Khalifa of Ahmadi Muslims unifies mankind not on political grounds but on spiritual grounds.

In the verse previously cited, from Surah Al-Imran, "and you were on the brink of a pit of fire and He saved you from it. Thus does Allah explain to you His commandments that you may be guided." (8) Allah offers the solution to the turmoil facing the world today.

Is the world not on the brink of a pit of fire? The fire of war and imminent nuclear catastrophe is more imminent today than at any time in history. The verse referenced suggests that only through this rope of Allah, can mankind be saved.

In a recent address to the Dutch Parliament on October 17, 2015, the Fifth Khalifa, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad (aba) stated,

"I, and indeed all true Ahmadi Muslims, are not amongst those people who are creating or partaking in today's disorder and unrest. Rather, we are the people who desire peace in the world. We are the people who seek to heal the world. We are the people who seek to unite mankind. We are the people who seek to transform all hatreds and enmities into love and affection. And most certainly, we are the people who make every possible effort towards establishing world peace." (9)

He continues to emphasize that true peace can only be achieved when nations exercise justice in their dealings with other nations: "Islam teaches that in all circumstances, no matter how difficult, you must remain firmly attached to the principles of justice and integrity... The truth is that sustainable peace can never be established until there is justice at every level of society." (10)

In regards to helping the poorer nations of the world, he stated [in the same address]: "They (affluent nations) should seek to re-invest the majority of what they earn in poorer countries and use the wealth to help the local people develop and to flourish. If the developed countries act in this way, it will not just be of benefit to the

poorer nations but will prove mutually beneficial."

Not only does the Khalifa of Ahmadi Muslims pray for the betterment of mankind as a whole, but he forms permanent brotherly bonds with each member of his community and with other non-Ahmadi Muslims as well. He also acts as their protector. The Holy Prophet (sa) of Islam said that "an Imam is like a shield. Indeed, safety is behind the shield alone." (11) The Khalifa's personal connection extends to people of all backgrounds and all races. There is no problem, be it of the Jama'at or of someone's private life of which the Khalifa of the time is not aware, and for which he does not turn to God with prayer.



Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad (aba)
Khalifatul Masih V

In regards to his duty to pray for others, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad (aba) states: 'There is no country in the world that I do not go to in my imagination before falling asleep and for whom I do not pray while sleeping and while waking. I am not saying this to count favors, no, this is my duty and may Allah the Exalted make me perform my duty more than ever.'

It is this characteristic of love for humanity combined with personal love, that differentiates the Khalifa of Ahmadi Muslims from all other worldly leaders.

Conclusion

“But as for those who follow guidance, He adds to their guidance, and bestows on them righteousness suited to their condition.” (13)

If we view the Ahmadi Muslim community as a flock of birds flying, we see that Ahmadi Muslims have achieved so much because they follow a single leader. Just as birds move at extremely fast speeds reaching new heights, similarly Ahmadi Muslims, in following the leadership of their Khalifa, reach spiritual and secular heights at the fastest speeds. Ahmadi Muslim Khilafat is the wind that enables Ahmadi Muslims to accomplish more under the guidance and prayers of their spiritual leader.

Therefore, while Khilafat promotes diversity, it also unifies. Just as our solar system, with so many different planets revolving around a unifying sun, each Ahmadi Muslim follows the guidance and message of the Khalifa of the Ahmadiyya Muslim community. And so, while we may each differ in our skills, backgrounds, and cultures, under the magnetic spiritual pull of an Ahmadi Muslim Khalifa, we remain united in purpose and direction.



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Causes of Disunity in Present Day Muslim Ummah

Dr. Muhammad Zafar Iqbal

Current miserable state and continued decline of Muslims Ummah (Community) around the world needs no introductory remarks. We can glimpse at any form of news media on a daily basis and apprise ourselves of news reflecting sorry state of Muslims. Bloody conflicts between Muslim nations like Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Lebanon, Palestine, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Turkey put the worldwide Muslim community to shame.

In an article on the present-day state of Muslims and its causes titled, "Disunity and Decline: A Direct Proportionality," Dr. Gohar Mushtaq writes:

"Sheikh ul-Hind, Maulana Mahmood ul Hasan (died in 1922 C.E.), who was imprisoned in the Island of Malta by the British government in India, said that during his 4 years in prison, he contemplated over the cause of the decline of Muslim Ummah and he reached the following conclusions: There appear to be two reasons for the decline of the Muslim Ummah today:

There appear to be two reasons for the decline of the Muslim Umma today: First, Muslims have forsaken the Qur'an, and secondly, Muslims are disunited.

Allah has sent down the Qur'an for the Muslims so that they would absorb and integrate the teachings of the Qur'an into their character just as the companions (sahaabah) of Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa) did. Maryam Jameelah, an Islamic scholar, once mentioned that one of the things she observed among the Muslims is that they can sacrifice their life for the Qur'an but they cannot live their life according to the Qur'an. This is a very profound observation." (1)

To have a proper perspective, Muslim Ummah deserves to be proud of its past glory and heritage and Muslim youth should be brought up with the rightful inspirations based on a glorious heritage.

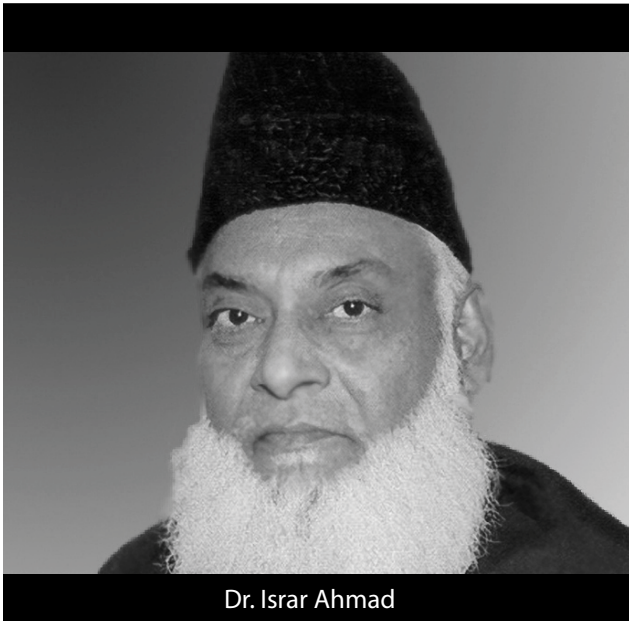
Historical sketch of rise and fall of Muslim Ummah is presented by Dr. Israr Ahmad in his article, "Rise and Decline of Muslim Ummah." He writes, "During the reign

of the first, three caliphs, Abu Bakr (ra), Umar (ra), and Usman (ra) who were all immediate disciples of Muhammad (sa), the 'unlettered' descendants of Ismail (the Arabs) sallied forth like a flood from the Arabian Peninsula, with the Qur'an in one hand and a sword in the other. In less than a quarter of a century they planted the flag of Islam not only in Iran, Iraq, Syria, Palestine, and Egypt, but also upon a considerable portion of North Africa. During the Caliphate of Ali (ra) this expansion ceased temporarily, but with the beginning of the Umayyad era it started again. Within a short span of time, new lands were conquered extending in the East through Turkistan and Afghanistan up to Siridh, and in the West extending through the entire area of North Africa and a vast area of Western Europe including Spain. This was the time when Arab armies, advancing from Spain, had reached the heart of France. Their civilization' and culture, their religion, their arts and sciences and their supremacy continued to exercise its hold on the greater portion of the civilized world." (2)

As the worldly and political power of Muslims reached its zenith by the 10th century, the faith and spiritual decline had started. During the 12th and 13th centuries, the first of the chastisement with which Allah Almighty had threatened the Jews, and which He meted out to them overtook the Muslim Ummah. Crusaders swarmed from the West and in 1099, not only the sanctity of Al-Aqsa Mosque was defiled, there was also a massacre in Jerusalem on such a vast scale that even the Western historians feel guilty, while mentioning it in their accounts. From the East came the great stormy hordes of Tartars, who first ravaged Afghanistan and Iran, and in 1258 A.D. devastated Baghdad completely. Millions of Muslims were savagely murdered. The streets of Baghdad turned into pools of blood and the famous city of 'A thousand and one nights' was literally razed to the ground. Thus, the following threat of Divine chastisement upon the Muslim Ummah was fulfilled:

"And if you turn your backs, He will bring in your place another people; then they will not be like you." (3)

The disgrace of the Arabs in 1967 at the hands of the



Dr. Israr Ahmad

Jews, and the degradation in 1971 of an important segment of non-Arab Muslims, can be regarded as the final limit of the deterioration and degeneration of the Muslim Ummah.

There have been efforts to revive the unity of the Muslim Ummah throughout the history of Islam but especially over the past century.

On this subject Dr. Israr Ahmad writes, "As a matter of fact, no period of degradation and degeneration in Islamic history is without attempt to reform and rejuvenate the Muslim Ummah. In every epoch and in every country, people of sublime determination were born who performed the gigantic task of reformation and reconstruction, as their times demanded. But all such efforts were made before the Twentieth century. In these efforts, the real objective was not the revival of religion, but its defense and protection." (4)

The notable names mentioned by Dr. Israr Ahmad who worked on this noble mission and movements are:

1. Shah Waliullah of Delhi, the great Indian divine (d. 1763).
2. Al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun' in Egypt.
3. Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab in Arabian Peninsula.
4. Khilafat Movement in Indian subcontinent.
5. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad in India.
6. Syed Abul A'la Mawdudi.

Again, Dr. Israr Ahmad writes, "Many individuals have aspired to become the 'Promised Mahdi' or the 'The Perfect Renewer of the Faith'. In the wake of these claims a variety of heresies have appeared and because of them a good many positively constructive efforts have been doomed." (5)

Dr. Israr Ahmad and other Muslim scholars, by highlighting the concept of Promised Mahdi, indirectly admit that real unity can be realized only through him and the righteous Khilafat based on the precepts of prophethood, which will follow him.

The following references of Holy Qur'an and Ahadith (sayings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa)) shed light on the signs and timing of the advent of the Promised Mahdi.

"And He will raise him among others of them who have not yet joined them." (6)

This verse signifies that the Holy Prophet (sa) will be raised among another people who have not yet joined his immediate followers. The reference in the verse is to the Second Advent of the Holy Prophet (sa) in the person of the Promised Messiah in the Latter Days. (7)

Hazrat Huzaifa (ra) narrates that the Messenger of Allah (sa) said: "Prophethood will remain among you as long as Allah wills. Then Khilafat on the lines of prophethood shall commence, and remain as long as Allah wills. Then corrupt/erosive monarchy would take place, and it will remain as long as Allah wills. After that, despotic kingship would emerge, and it will remain as long as Allah wills. Then, the Khilafat shall come once again based on the precept of prophethood." (8) In this Hadith, the promise of Khilafat is connected with prophethood on two separate occasions.

Hazrat Abu Hurairah (ra) narrates: "When Surah Jumu'ah was revealed to the Holy Prophet (sa), we happened to be there in his company. When he recited the verse 'And there are others from among them who have not yet joined them' (9) one of those present asked 'Who are they O' Messenger of Allah? The Holy Prophet (sa) did not pay any attention. The man repeated the question two or three times. At that time, Salman Farsi (Salman the Persian) was also sitting among us. The Holy Prophet turned to him, placed his hand on him and said 'even if faith ascended to the Pleiades, there would be one man from his people who would restore faith (back) to earth.'" (10)

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian (as), the Promised Messiah and Mahdi, was a Mughal of Persian descent whose ancestors came to Punjab with Babar the Conqueror around 1506 AD. (11)

Hazrat Imam Baqar Muhammad bin Ali (ra) has narrated the following Hadith: "There are two signs of our Mahdi which have never been manifested for any claimant since the creation of heaven and earth. They are that the moon will be eclipsed in the month of Ramadan on the first of the nights appointed for its eclipse, and that the sun will be eclipsed in the same month of Ramadan on the middle one of the days appointed for its eclipse." (12)

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian (as) made his claim to be Messiah in 1891. An eclipse of the moon occurred on Thursday night, the 13th of Ramadan, 1311 Hijri (March 21, 1894), and the eclipse of the sun occurred on the 28th of the same month of Ramadan (April 6, 1894), in exact accord with the prophecy of

the Holy Prophet (sa). The same phenomenon was repeated in the United States of America in 1895.(13)

In light of the above signs, prophecies and their fulfillment in the person of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as), those fortunate souls who were blessed with recognition of the Imam of the Age accepted him and became part of his community. By the Grace of Allah Almighty, the community is growing in leaps and bounds since its establishment in 1889 in spite of bitter opposition fulfilling many of promised Messiah's (as) prophecies. Today Ahmadi Muslim Khilafat based on precept of prophethood is the only way to unite Muslim Ummah. May Allah Almighty enlighten the Ummah to recognize the truth.

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The United Nations: Success or Failure in Maintaining Peace and Security?

Labeeb Ahmad

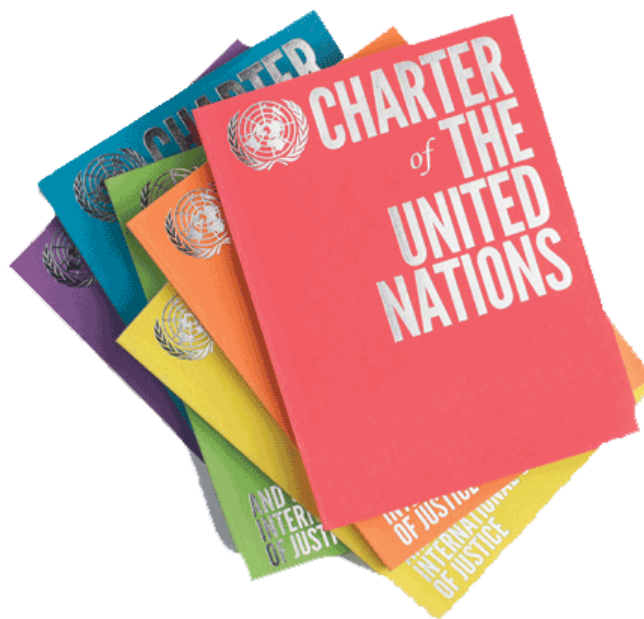
The United Nations (UN) is the largest supranational organization, currently with a membership of 193 countries. It was created shortly after World War II when 51 countries signed the Charter of the United Nations, the United Nations' governing document, at an international conference in San Francisco on June 26, 1945. While the League of Nations came to an end nearly two decades after the conclusion of World War I and was largely a failure due to unfavorable circumstances and a lack of power and resources, the United Nations has survived for over seven decades now.

The first purpose of the United Nations, according to its Charter, is as follows:

"To maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace, and to bring about by peaceful means and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace." (1)

This article will focus specifically on the United Nations' first and most important objective: to maintain international peace and security, with the parameters being from the 1980s to modern times. It will analyze whether or not the United Nations has fulfilled this purpose, as well as view the problems obstructing its success, both in the past and present.

According to detailed information presented for the 70th anniversary of the United Nations (on its website, un.org), the United Nations has achieved success "through its involvement with a multitude of peacekeeping operations around the world. Many tasks have been carried out favorably such as sending 69 peacekeeping and observer missions to the world's trouble spots over the past six decades, in order that calm is restored and allowing many countries to recover from conflict. In 2015, there were still 16 peacekeeping operations around the world, carried out by some 125,000 brave men and women from 120 countries who go where others cannot or will not go." (2)



Yet there are also huge peacekeeping failures haunting the United Nations. For example, general consensus holds that the unwillingness and completely insufficient intervention in maintaining peace in Rwanda during and following a civil war between the ethnically-dominated Hutu government and the ethnically-led Tutsi rebel Rwandese Patriotic Front in the early 1990s, is the greatest failure of the United Nations. Although peacekeeping forces were sent in 1993 during a cease-fire agreement, this mission had little to no effect, as they were unable to prevent the genocide of 800,000 Tutsis in 1994. The United Nations was unable to live up to its stated goals, and stood accused, in deplorable fashion, of "ignoring evidence that a genocide was planned, refusing to act once it was under way and finally abandoning the Rwandan people when they most needed protection." (3)

The United Nations also neglected its duties in Sudan. Tension broke out in 2003 when militant groups criticized the government for their oppression of non-Arabs. When it was evident that the government would eventually lose the conflict, it funded the Janjaweed, an

Arab militant group, to act as a counter-insurgency force. Instead of intervening, United Nations Secretary General, Kofi Annan, issued mere verbal condemnations and urged other groups to intervene. A meager 200 troops were issued, and, accordingly, the fighting continued until 2010. Although the independent country of South Sudan was created formally in 2011, the inhumane bloodshed is not forgotten, and the country continues to be torn by civil conflicts and power struggles.



These two conflicts mentioned above have parallels and outcomes with other similar events, such as the bloody civil war in Sri Lanka in which 6,500 civilians died, and the 1995 Srebrenica massacre in which nearly 8,000 Bosnian Muslims were slain at the hands of the native Serbs in a so-called United Nations 'safe zone'. The United Nation's questionable deference, miniature aid, and non-strategic responses towards these conflicts completely undermine the stated purpose of the United Nations. In many cases, for example, the Bosnian massacre, the peacekeeping forces sent by the United Nations were virtually non-existent, being ill-equipped and unprepared. Of course, not every conflict can be completely resolved by the United Nations, but the lack of power to influence other organizations and nations indicates a flimsy level of leadership capabilities on a global scale.

In spite of terror attacks holding a position of significance since the formation of the United Nations, the first serious moves against the threat of terrorism were made in the form of multiple Security Council resolutions following 9/11. These resolutions urged member states to clamp down on terrorist activity by suppressing the financial sources of terrorist organizations, denying them safe havens, detecting and restricting recruitment efforts, and prioritizing the sharing of security intelligence in the international community.

However, the phenomena of terrorism has remained unaffected by United Nations actions, which have usually consisted of simple condemnations instead of severe operations. This is not necessarily due solely to the failure of the United Nations to act, but more so due to the nature of modern day terrorism. Terrorism is a broad term, and different organizations disagree on which acts of aggression fall under the umbrella of terrorism. As a report produced by the Center of Strategic and International Terrorism notes, "There will always be those who will claim that some acts of violence against states and civilians are justified, and that another man's terrorist is their freedom fighter." (3) State-funded, state-sponsored terrorism, or even state-led terrorism in times of war to achieve the political objectives of the state, is also a major facet and many groups thrive due to the help of their state benefactors. The resolutions following 9/11 did little to address these types of infractions, and nations involved in these activities have little to no accountability from the United Nations. Sectarianism, regional geopolitics, and "clashes within civilizations" all play a role in the support of direct and indirect terrorism. (3) Thus, the involvement of too many players in modern-day conflicts impedes the United Nation's capacity to act straightforwardly and independently. The United Nation's shortcoming in the realm of terrorism also stems from the inability to react to the 'domino' effects of small terror attacks, leading to drastic consequences in regional conflicts and in international relations.

Perhaps the greatest threat to international security since the end of World War II has been the development, acquisition, and proliferation of nuclear weapons by various nations. In this area, the United Nation's efforts have received mixed reviews. Presently, there are nine recognized nations who own nuclear weapons: Russia, the United States, China, France, the United Kingdom, Pakistan, India, Israel, and North Korea. 4 Ironically, the five members of the Security Council (the first five in the list above) have the largest nuclear arsenals in the world.



Disarmament of weapons of mass destruction advocated by the United Nations has traditionally been confined to negotiating treaties and implementing policies of continuous monitoring compliance. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is the auxiliary body of the United Nations that leads the effort of nuclear non-proliferation and primarily monitors civilian nuclear programs. Due to loopholes in the cornerstone document of the IAEA, that is, the Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), many are skeptical about its effectiveness, and therefore use secretive intelligence-sharing alliances and covert operations instead. One example skeptics point to is the ability of nations to develop nuclear facilities in the pretense of civil energy purposes, and then withdrawing from the NPT to pursue a militaristic nuclear agenda. A recent significant advancement in world peace with regard to nuclear weapons is the Iran Nuclear Deal, signed in 2013 by Iran and the five members of the Security Council, plus Germany. Although a controversial deal, it is viewed by many as a step in the right direction in an extremely volatile region. Overall, only 9 countries own nuclear weapons today, even though it was widely believed in the 1960s that over 30 countries would have them at the turn of the century. This is a solid testament to the success of the NPT. 5 Nonetheless, tensions regarding nuclear destruction remain extremely high due to distrust between the major powers of the world, as well as fears of which suspicious nations or groups will acquire such weapons.

Directly related to the prospect of the spread and use of nuclear weapons is the ludicrous and unchecked arms trading prevalent in our globalized society. There is irony, or perhaps sheer hypocrisy, in Security Council members

being 5 of the top 6 largest conventional arms dealers in the world with a combined total of nearly 124 billion dollars in exports. 6 These weapons routinely end up in the wrong hands, and regional conflicts around the world are fueled by a constant flow of weapons from the so-called nations who wish for peace in the world – the rise of ISIL being a prime example of this.

By no means do the criticisms of the United Nations in this article undermine the expansive human rights programs, humanitarian and health-related aid, environmental and World Heritage Site protection efforts, combating famine, improving literacy and education – to name but a few initiatives that the organization has given the world. However, there are serious structural failures which need to be fixed in order for the United Nations to truly fulfill its purpose – to create peace in the world. Many nations are calling for the reform of the United Nations, primarily the sheer power the Security Council and the ability for a single member to veto, and therefore, to nullify any proposed resolutions. This is precisely why the two long-lasting crises of the Israel-Palestine conflict and Syrian civil war have not been resolved. The United Nations is unable to seriously tackle these issues because the Superpowers are concerned primarily with their own vested interests, thereby undermining the legitimacy of the United Nations. Administration and security is often done on the precepts of potential political, economic, and territorial gains instead of on the moral grounds of absolute justice. Moreover, inequality in the United Nations also disrupts any authentic chance of fulfilling their overarching goals, as certain nations wield far more unhealthy power than others. In these circumstances, one can only imagine that the United Nations will suffer the same fate as the League of Nations.

Labeeb Ahmad is Vice-Chairman of the Muslims Writers Guild of America.

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Is Global Unity Possible?

Rabia Salim

From the moral, spiritual, and political perspective, is global unity a far-fetched utopia, or a reality?

I will start by looking at the factors that disturb global peace. I will begin with economic factors that divide the world. Currently, there is no system in any nation that takes care of the underprivileged in society, allows for individual growth and prevents money from getting held up in the wrong hands for unnecessarily long periods. Look and find me one, there isn't. Let's briefly look back at the economic crisis in September 2008.(1) In what can be described as the folly of the financiers, the bankers acted as though they had more money than they did, and other countries outside America in Europe also borrowed greedily from American banks. This is also the folly of the capitalist financial system, showing how capitalism doesn't work. It creates a false sense of worth, and then when it fails it results in disillusionment and no security.

The second successor (Caliph) to the Promised Messiah, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian (as), Hazrat Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad (ra) delivered a wonderful lecture in Lahore explaining the economic system laid out by the Holy Qur'an. In this lecture, for the purpose of understanding the system, he also talks about communism- another system that doesn't work. The consequence of communism in Russia is that black markets emerged, but these were run by the authorities themselves, not the illegal sectors of society. The reason for the emergence of black markets was the lack of equality suppressed the individualities in people from flourishing. However, as this is human nature, corruption was coming from the people who were in power. So even though people were supposed to be treated equally, what resulted was disillusionment because important people could still get whatever they wanted. Other issues include how can each individual's labor be measured the same, when the costs for a jeweler would be much more than a tailor, and communism cannot resolve any of these issues.(2)

Islam teaches that the responsibility of the improvement of the economic well-being of the people lies in the hands of those in authority of the country. The Islamic teachings are outlined in this lecture by Hazrat Mirza



Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad (ra) and he describes it as a system based on law. It doesn't just look at the nation's benefits or just the individual; it is about securing peace, well-being and security. First, the leader has to be just. He has to apply moral and spiritual principles to his rulership.(3) Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad (rh), the fourth Caliph also talks about this goodness.(4) He elaborates how we should follow God and goodness because this is what human nature is drawn to. He also explains the collapse of capitalism, the rush for foreign markets resulting in enmity between nations and inevitable world war.



So how do we achieve peace? This is the second point of the Islamic system- the giving hand is generous to the less fortunate. It is a God-given obligation to give charity, and furthermore, the help given to the poor is not done with debt. Therefore, interest or usury is not permitted in Islam. Both successors mention this point. They said that overall, reducing extravagance in standard of living is a way to achieve economic peace and equity in a nation. We are told to seek out those people who are unable to raise their voice to ask for money and help them. Ultimately, the wealthy should reflect on whether they fulfilled their responsibility rather than reminding the poor of their good deed and that they did a huge favor on someone.⁽⁵⁾ The Promised Messiah (as) explained this behavior as, 'ihsan' which means the doing of good without expecting anything in return.

Another factor to look at that takes us away from peace is moral or spiritual death because like capitalism, if humans are just out for themselves and chase what they want, without looking at what their brother or neighbor needs, it results in an imbalance.⁽⁶⁾ A good community is one that doesn't just go after what is best for only individuals in the community but the entire community. Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad (rh) says that man thinks he can fight each other and the world will be peaceful. However, the only way to achieve unity the world over is for every nation to strive on one path – to work for the cause of goodness. Unfortunately, this advice is largely being ignored and pushed aside. Therefore, humans are moving away from God and this is another cause, if not THE cause of global disorder. This goodness is within people, because truly, all people are attracted to truth and goodness, and these attributes are understood by people in different regions, nations, and cultures. For example, it is not difficult for an atheist to understand these qualities since they are universal and these values do not have to be clothed in any particular religion. The point is, politicians can solve divisions by using morality in their field, but they don't, which makes politics very divisive. If politicians heeded and applied morality to their practice, it would make politics universal. Just think of 'justice' applied to Kuwait, Palestine, Bosnia, and now-days to Syria. This is not justice at all, but is in the interests of individual countries.

One can say that both these points are interrelated, and now, what is the potential solution to this madness? The solution to this madness is living a more God conscious life, and calling other people towards a path that encourages each other to do good and staying away from evil. As described in the Holy Qur'an, this quality creates a

happy atmosphere: "By the Time, surely man is ever in a state of loss, except those who believe and do righteous deeds, and exhort one another to preach truth, and exhort one another to be steadfast."⁽⁷⁾

As mentioned earlier, the key to solving global disunity is being ignored, but will things change? The fact is, capitalism, competition between countries, the super-powers of USA, Russia and China that have risen from progress based on financial gain, lack of morality, all lead to global war. If you look closer at the previous world wars, a time comes before war when markets are saturated and collapse, and this happens on a global level.⁴ Also, violent wars have already started in many regions of the world. Our present Caliph, the fifth successor to the Promised Messiah (as), Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad (aba), has advised us on this repeatedly in an address delivered in Sweden on May 2016. ⁽⁸⁾ In this address he wisely talks about the definition of the word 'peace'. He said that the word means security, safety, obedience. One of the attributes of God is that He is the 'Source of Peace'. All the things that create peace such as, helping orphans, kindness to parents and neighbors, lead to compassion, love and mercy. Ahmadi Muslims are working on humanitarian welfare by building hospitals and providing clean, running water just to name some examples. The Caliph is warning the world of a third world war, however, he is presenting a pathway to a solution that will only succeed when the leaders pay heed to justice and lose self-interest.

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The United States of America – One Nation, Under God

Mazher Ahmad

“We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.” (1)

The United States of America is a nation founded on the fundamental principle that all men are created equal and at the core of its Constitution, as stated in the First Amendment (quoted above), resides the powerful concept that all people possess the freedom to exercise their religion. This basic tenant of American law has been the cornerstone of the world’s leading democracy for the past 240 years and, as such, has established the core essence of a nation aspiring to balance diversity in a unified way. As we study American history a little closer, we realize that along with the right to practice religion freely, there also exists a darker parallel wrong by those who have attempted to suppress these religious freedoms. Although a system still in progress, where there is room for continued improvement, the American experiment is by far the most advanced among nations across the world and holds within it the potential for even further greatness.

The history of the United States has been built, for the most part, on communities leaving their homeland for the promise of a life of greater freedom, often to be met by strong resistance from local religious institutions. Kenneth C. Davis, in his insightful article, “America’s True History of Religious Tolerance” outlines a multitude of examples that highlight this phenomenon.

Davis states, “In the storybook version most of us learned in school, the Pilgrims came to America aboard the Mayflower in search of religious freedom in 1620. The Puritans soon followed, for the same reason. Ever since these religious dissidents arrived at their shining ‘city upon a hill,’ as their governor John Winthrop called it, millions from

around the world have done the same, coming to an America where they found a welcome melting pot in which everyone was free to practice his or her own faith.

The problem is that this tidy narrative is an American myth. The real story of religion in America’s past is an often awkward, frequently embarrassing, and occasionally bloody tale that most civics books and high-school texts either paper over, or shunt to the side. And much of the recent conversation about America’s ideal of religious freedom has paid lip service to this comforting tableau.” (2)



This insight is a profound view into the pattern that has emerged over American history of seekers of religious freedom being greeted by those who seek to keep them at bay. Davis goes on to provide example after example, including the first known encounter between European settlers in the future United States in 1564, where French Protestant Huguenots who established a colony at Fort Caroline, Florida (near current day Jacksonville) were massacred by the Spanish for spreading their Lutheran teachings.

He describes a variety of similar trends over the years, including:

- In the 1600s, during the Puritan era in New England, many Catholics were banished and even hanged for their beliefs, considered heretical to the core religious institutions of power.
- Many of the underlying feelings of the American Revolution were based on the tensions when King

law “meant to comprehend, within the mantle of its protection, the Jew, the Gentile, the Christian and the Mahometan, the Hindoo and Infidel of every denomination.” This work later went on to Congress, and led to the firm establishment of the separation of Church and State, an accomplishment many of the founding fathers took great pride in.

However, even with this incredible accomplishment of creating a functioning secular state, American history continued to fall into the trap of internal religious dissent. Kenneth Davis further expounds that the cycle of religious intolerance continued:

“In Philadelphia, the City of Brotherly Love, anti-Catholic sentiment, combined with the country’s anti-immigrant mood, fueled the Bible Riots of 1844, in which houses were torched, two Catholic churches were destroyed and at least 20 people were killed.

At about the same time, Joseph Smith founded a new American religion—and soon met with the wrath of the mainstream Protestant majority. In 1832, a mob tarred and feathered him, marking the beginning of a long battle between Christian America and Smith’s Mormonism.”(3)

As America moved into the 20th century, as recently as the 1960s, Davis rightfully identifies the challenges that President John F. Kennedy faced in convincing American voters that he would not be pressured in his politics by his Catholic faith’s loyalty to the Papacy. And in the 2008 Presidential election, Barack Obama was questioned about his potential ties to Islam; in 2012, Mitt Romney had to ease voters’ concerns about his loyalty to the Church of Latter Day Saints.

As we consider this past history of both an openness to religious diversity and its associated challenges with ongoing religious oppression, we must do so in the context of the broader global environment. It is important to consider that, when compared to other nations as a force of unity amongst diversity, America still far exceeds the vast majority of countries in terms of religious tolerance. Consider the current situation in Muslim nations such as Pakistan, Iraq, Iran, Syria and Saudi Arabia, where religious minorities are not just challenged by majority sects, but are subject to systematic and legal oppression that prevents them from engaging in any hope of religious equality. Even modern western nations, like France, where the American ideals of Liberty and Equality were founded, struggle with



balancing their own religious identity with those coming from Muslim countries challenging their way of life.

Looking ahead, when considering how the United States of America can continue to push through its current political climate of religious intolerance, particularly towards Muslims, there are a few critical remedies that leaders and citizens alike can consider. For example, the power of Interfaith Dialogue provides people from different religions a framework to learn about the commonalities in each other’s faiths, and begins to have them walk a mile in their counterpart’s shoes. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community’s founder, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as), was at the forefront of these discussions, encouraging all of his followers to hold such meetings. Today, over one hundred years later, in cities across the USA, the Community holds its Religious Founder’s Day meetings, where mutual religious tolerance and peaceful co-existence are central topics of discourse. Coupled with periodicals such as the ‘Review of Religions’, great strides have been made in deepening an understanding of all faiths.

In addition, remedies must also start with educating American youth on religious differences. As an American born Ahmadi Muslim, I was fortunate over my formative years, to attend a predominantly Jewish middle school in suburban Baltimore, and thereafter, to spend four years being educated by Jesuit priests at a Catholic high school. During this time, my parents encouraged me to challenge my beliefs and assumptions, to push my thinking as well as the ideas of those around me, and by doing so, I gained a deeper sense of appreciation for the beauties and commonalities that our faiths held in common. Today, both of my children have attended Jewish faith-based schools and are learning that, to be an Ahmadi Muslim, they are required to understand, accept and appreciate the Prophets and holy teachings of other great monotheistic religions. This uniquely American experience is a profound example of how this nation has provided a deep sense of unity amongst its citizens, both in spite of and because of, the great diversity from which it is comprised.

In conclusion, this concept of unity in religious diversity within the United States of America is again best captured by Kenneth Davis as he aptly shares an excerpt from the nation's first President, George Washington, who in 1790 addressed Jewish members of the Touro Synagogue, America's oldest synagogue, located in Newport, Rhode

Island:

"All possess alike liberty of conscience and immunity of citizenship. ...For happily the Government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance, requires only that they who live under its protection should demean themselves as good citizens. May the children of the Stock of Abraham, who dwell in this land, continue to merit and enjoy the good will of the other inhabitants, while everyone shall sit in safety under his own vine and fig tree, and there shall be none to make him afraid." (4)

Mazher Ahmad is a strategic business advisor to Fortune 500 companies, and is actively involved in public affairs and social justice volunteer work. Mazher holds an MBA from the University of Chicago, and a BA from University of Pennsylvania, and currently resides in Morristown, NJ with his wife and two children.

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Philadelphia's Bible Riots of 1844 reflected a strain of anti-Catholic bias and hostility that coursed through 19th-century America. (Granger Collection, New York)

Paradox of Unity in Diversity

Arifa Haleem

'Unity in diversity' is a concept with a deep meaning that opens a door of understanding



God Almighty's grand plan of creating the whole universe. He chose to create the universe as He Willed and decorated the sky with the sun, moon, galaxies planets and uncountable diamond like shining stars and also created the earth and beautified it with living and nonliving things of different exotic colors. He created man with many organs working for one body and gave him the purpose of life i.e. to worship God and to serve fellow human beings. God is the Ultimate Unity and could have created all the human beings alike but He chose to create a universe that is full of the wonders of diversity and told man that now it's your task to create unity in diversity and use it for the higher purpose.

Unity and diversity. Two opposite words that contradict each other and appear to be a paradox. It is an impossible and confusing concept to have unity in diversity but it's possible and can be achieved because they are the words of God Who is All Truth. In the Holy Quran God says, "O' mankind! We have created you from male and female and We have made you into tribes and sub tribes so you may recognize one another. Verily, the most honorable among you, in the sight of Allah, is he who is the most righteous among you. Surely Allah is All Knowing, All Aware" (1)

Since the time of world's existence, it has gone through a lot of changes. In this new era a new world is emerging, and the circumstances indicate the dominance of materialism. Due to the mad race of competition multiple divisions at

national and international level have taken place. In almost every field of life serious events and actions are happening and the graph of minor as well as major conflicts is getting higher and higher. So In glorious Qur'an Allah says,

"And, surely, We have explained in various ways in this Qur'an, for the good of mankind, all kinds of similitudes, but of all things man is most contentious" (2)

God Is All-Knowing, so when He created man He knew that by nature he is quarrelsome and from time to time his nature will be inclined towards conflicts. By keeping in view human nature He assigned humanity a goal i.e. to unite mankind for some common good and seek the pleasure of the Ultimate Unity. Diversity has its own beauty but when serious conflicts occur on a larger scale humanity cannot forget the goal of unification and shirk its responsibilities.

Humanity has to be more conscious and vigilant to save the world from grim situations and unite mankind for the sake of peace, prosperity and harmony.

So in order to help humanity, from time to time, God Almighty sent His chosen beloved ones in the form of messengers and prophets to remind mankind about the real purpose of their life. He created man as His best creation and blessed him with the gift of rationality so that he could differentiate between right and wrong by ignoring the flaws, weaknesses and other differences of his fellow beings and could be able to pave the way for unification of humanity that leads to the goodness of all mankind.

After World War II mutual losses, suffering and sacrifice made the Europeans realize that it was necessary to become united and have a union which could promote greater peace and prosperity in the whole world. They chose to ignore their individual differences and decided to form a single European entity. Today it comprises 28 European countries and is a politico-economic union that governs social and security related policies. This great alliance may have gone through some failures but overall it has yielded impressive results. There is no other place in

the world where so many diverse cultures, languages and religions can be found. By following their motto "united in diversity" they are working hard for the world's unity, peace, prosperity, health, education etc.

USA is a mixture of many nationalities. As a cosmopolitan country it has emerged as a supreme power that is ruling the world. It comprises of 50 states, and each state may have different socio economic needs or they may have some sort of differences and conflicting political views but when it comes to their nationhood all the states are united with all their heart and soul and they are "One nation Under God". In spite of diversity of color, religion, culture, language and other factors all the people are respected and live with dignity under the umbrella of justice and liberty and no one is above law. In collaboration with other countries this supreme power is reaching for the skies and exploring the planets for the benefit of humanity. This is also the land of volunteers and humanitarians. Different humanitarian charity groups and organizations are working for the help of thirsty, hungry and sick mankind purely on humanitarian grounds. Actually all the noble humanitarian work that is taught in Islamic teachings are being practiced here in an un-Islamic country.

Islam is a dynamic religion but now it has become stagnant. The clerics and the corrupt politicians are practicing corruption in the name of religion for their own ulterior motives. In these circumstances the Muslim World has become a world of paradoxes where the teachings are "peace" but the practice is "terror". Pakistan, a Muslim country, has been divided into different sections. Especially in religious matters they are staunch enemies of one another and it is a heart breaking situation. It is God's command, "And hold fast all together, by the rope of Allah and be not divided among your selves" (3)

"And hold fast all together, by the rope of Allah and be not divided among your selves"



But contrary to God's command killing in the name of religion is happening every day.

The religion of peace has become a dirty political battle field. Due to their heinous activities, not only the whole nation but every individual Muslim has been labelled a terrorist. The peace loving followers of true Islam are in real trouble. Even their basic human rights have been usurped. So in this grim situation of insecurity, killings, fear and instability, they are migrating to other countries for the sake of peace and stability.

All the messengers of God carried the message of love for Allah and His mankind and the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa) excelled in conveying the true message of Islam. He was a great symbol of love and blessings for all mankind and set an example of worshipping One God and caring for the distressed of humanity. In an Islamic world the call for prayer and pilgrimage to Mecca show the universality of Islamic injunctions and convey the message of unification under the love of the Ultimate Unity. It is a grand display of universality and it is an unforgettable sight to see multitudes of people with all their variations coming to Mecca from all over the world with the common purpose to please God and learn the lesson of peace unity and love.

The Promised Messiah (as) and Mahdi, the expected redeemer and a great devotee and lover of the Holy Prophet (sa) was sent by God to carry on the same message of love, unity and peace for the scattered and divided humanity. Now the fifth successor of The Promised Messiah (as), Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad (aba) is a ray of light when humanity is passing through turbulent

times. He along with his millions of followers is working hard for the unification of all mankind under the banner of "Love for all, hatred for none" with the goal of unveiling the true face of Islamic teachings. These followers of true Islam irrespective of their great diversity come from far and wide and gather in millions to attend the annual congregation for spiritual refreshment and take back home the message of love, unification and service of humanity. In these times of trials the spiritual Head of the Ahmadiyya Community reveals the light in which the fountain of love is sprouting and gushing out its spiritual waters. At some spots the stones of hatred, greed, selfishness, conflicts, ulterior motives of clerics and dirty politics are a big hurdle in the way of spiritually thirsty humanity who wants to drink deep from the fountain of love and gain strength progress and prosperity. These are the hard facts of life but in spite of bitter facts love does not care about any obstacle. It throws away all the stones of hatred and discord. Without the barriers of caste, creed, race, language and color it slowly and steadily conquers the hearts and souls of mankind. This bonding force of love strengthens mutual ties and helps in developing mutual understanding.

Sharing a common goal is always a great attraction for coming closer to one another and in this regard Humanity First is a unique example of unity in diversity. It is a multinational charity organization. Its purpose is to serve

humanity so it is always the first one to reach the disaster hit areas and irrespective of color, race, religion, language and political back ground it takes care of the affected people by protecting their lives and rehabilitating them by maintaining their respect and dignity. It was founded by Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad (rh) the fourth successor of Promised Messiah (as) and now it is run by thousands of volunteers. Doctors, nurses, engineers, teachers, and other technical people of diverse backgrounds travel on their own expense all around the globe to feed the hungry, to help the needy and to heal the ailing mankind. Water for life, Feed the families, and learn the skills, orphan care, gift of sight, schools colleges in poor countries are their projects to accomplish.

The Ultimate Unity created diversity in the form of this universe and made it beautiful and complex for man. He instructed him to achieve the pleasure and love of God through the service to humanity. In order to achieve this purpose He blessed him with the higher attribute of rationality. He also blessed him with compassion, understanding and tolerance to unite mankind and in order to solve the paradox of "unity in diversity." He handed him over the "Golden Key of Love" for opening the doors of higher good.

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RELIGION & SCIENCE

Biology of Our Human Family: Who are We Related To?

Dr. Zia H. Shah

The 2016 Nobel Prize in medicine has been awarded to Yoshinori Ohsumi of Japan for his discoveries on how the body's cells detoxify and repair themselves through a process called autophagy. His work also supplied a subtle proof of evolution and the fact that all life forms on the planet earth share their ancestry.

Yoshinori Ohsumi used baker's yeast to identify genes essential for autophagy. He then went on to elucidate the underlying mechanisms for autophagy in yeast and showed that similar sophisticated machinery is used in human cells.(1) All the nine million animal and plant species in our world seem to share many proteins and enzymes. (2)

One illuminating example is that of the protein Cytochrome C that is involved in cell respiration. The sequence of amino acids in this protein is known for many organisms, from bacteria and yeast to insects and humans. In animals, Cytochrome C consists of 104 amino acids. In humans and chimpanzees, the protein consists of the same 104 amino acids in exactly the same order. When the amino-acid sequences of humans and rhesus monkeys are compared, they are found to be different at position 66 (isoleucine in humans, threonine in rhesus monkeys), but identical at the other 103 positions. When humans are compared with horses, 12 amino-acid differences are found; and when horses are compared with rhesus monkeys there are only 11 amino-acid differences. All these observations supporting common ancestry.

Not to speak of our human family, all life forms on our planet earth, plants and animals, 350,000 species of flowers, bacteria and viruses and elephants and rhinoceroses have common ancestry.

The Journey of Man: A Genetic Odyssey is a 2002 book by Spencer Wells, an American geneticist and anthropologist, in which he uses techniques and theories of genetics and evolutionary biology to trace the geographical dispersal of early human migrations out of Africa. The book was made into a TV documentary in 2003. (3)



Yoshinori Ohsumi

According to the recent single-origin hypothesis, human ancestors originated in Africa, and eventually made their way out to the rest of the world. Analysis of the Y chromosome is one of the methods used in tracing the history of early humans. Thirteen genetic markers on the Y-chromosome differentiate populations of human beings.

It is believed, on the basis of genetic evidence that all human beings in existence now descend from one single man who lived in Africa about 60,000 years ago. The earliest groups of humans are believed to find their present-day descendants among the San people, a group that is now found in western southern Africa. The San are smaller than the Bantu. They have lighter skins, more tightly curled hair, and they share the epicanthal fold with the people of Central and South East Asia.

Southern and eastern Africa are believed to originally have been populated by people akin to the San. Since that early time much of their range has been taken over

that early time much of their range has been taken over by the Bantu. Skeletal remains of these ancestral people are found in Paleolithic sites in Somalia and Ethiopia. There are also peoples in east Africa today who speak substantially different languages that nevertheless share the archaic characteristics of the San language, its distinctive repertoire of click and pop sounds. These are the only languages in the entire world that use these sounds in speech.

As humans migrated out of Africa, they all carried a genetic feature on the Y chromosome known as M168 (Haplogroup CT (Y-DNA)).

The first wave of migration out of Africa stayed close to the oceans shores, tracing a band along the coastal areas of the Indian Ocean including parts of the Arabian Peninsula, the Middle East, the Indian subcontinent and into South East Asia, down into what is now Indonesia, and eventually reaching Australia. This branch of the human family developed a new marker M130 (Haplogroup C (Y-DNA)).

The second wave of migration took a more northerly course, splitting somewhere in the area around what is now called Syria to sweep to interior Asia, where it split several more times in Central Asia, north of Afghanistan. The lineages that flowed into Central Asia carry M9 (Haplogroup K (Y-DNA)). Other markers were added after the migration paths went on in several different directions from Central Asia. (4)

There are several verses in the Holy Quran that allude to evolution of life and of the human family, employing one metaphor or the other. In the following verse Allah mentions the shared origin of all of humanity: "Your creation and your resurrection are only like the creation and resurrection of a single soul. Indeed, Allah is All-Hearing, All-Seeing." (5)

The two hour TV documentary, *The Journey of Man: A Genetic Odyssey*, can be watched online in the Muslim Times and gives us good insight into human biology and evolution of different races in the last 60,000 or so years. (6)

Now, let us talk about what happened to humans between 60,000 years and 7 million years ago. For this I suggest a trip to the Museums of Natural History in New York and London.

The Museum of Natural History in London states:



The Museum of Natural History in London, UK.

"Embark on a seven-million-year journey, from the first hominins to the last surviving human species: us.

Investigate what defines a hominin and how much we modern humans have in common with other human species, as well as what sets us apart.

Along the way you will discover the changes in physical characteristics, diet, lifestyles and environments that have shaped modern humans." (7)

The website then tabulates its star specimens and exhibits:

- 3.5-million-year-old Laetoli canine, the oldest hominin fossil in the Museum's collection
- Gibraltar 1 skull, the first adult Neanderthal skull ever found
- Skull and hand casts of the recently discovered human species, *Homo naledi*
- Scientifically accurate life-size Neanderthal and early *Homo sapiens* models
- 420,000-year-old Clacton spear, the oldest preserved wooden spear in the world

The biggest highlight of the American Museum of Natural History in New York is Lucy: "Lucy" is one of the most complete skeletons found to date from the early hominids that flourished between 4 and 2 million years ago. The skeleton consists of bones from a single individual, presumably female, who stood well under 4 feet tall. (8)

Prof. Richard Dawkins in his excellent book, *The Ancestor's Tale: A Pilgrimage to the Dawn of Evolution*, describes the human journey of evolution from unicellular organisms to the modern era, but traveling backwards in a reverse direction, starting with modern humans, through apes, through primates, rodents and rabbits and so on. (9)

The back cover of the book describes:

"With unparalleled wit, clarity, and intelligence, Richard Dawkins, one of the world's most renowned evolutionary biologists, has introduced countless readers to the wonders of science in works such as *The Selfish Gene*. Now, in *The Ancestor's Tale*, Dawkins offers a masterwork: an exhilarating reverse tour through evolution, from present-day humans back to the microbial beginnings of life four billion years ago. Throughout the journey Dawkins spins entertaining, insightful stories and sheds light on topics such as speciation, sexual selection, and extinction. *The Ancestor's Tale* is at once an essential education in evolutionary theory and a riveting read."

As we travel back through time and as two species join into a common species or a common ancestor, he names that common ancestor a 'concestor'. He writes about the common ancestry between the modern humans and the present day chimpanzees:

"Between 5 and 7 million years ago, somewhere in Africa, we human pilgrims enjoy a momentous encounter. It is Rendezvous 1, our first meeting with pilgrims from another species. Two other species to be precise, for the common chimpanzee pilgrims and the pygmy chimpanzee or bonobo pilgrims have already joined forces with each other some 4 million years 'before' their rendezvous with us. The common ancestor we share with them, Concestor 1, is our 250,000-greats-grandparent — an approximate guess this, of course, like the comparable estimates that I shall be making for other concestors."

As we approach Rendezvous 1, then, the chimpanzee pilgrims are approaching the same point from another direction. Unfortunately, we don't know anything about that other direction. Although Africa has yielded up some thousands of hominid fossils or fragments of fossils, not a single fossil has ever been found which can definitely be regarded as along the chimpanzee line of descent from Concestor 1. This may be because they are forest animals, and the leaf litter of forest floors is not friendly to fossils. Whatever the reason, it means that the chimpanzee pilgrims are searching blind. Their equivalent contemporaries of the Turkana Boy, of 1470, of Mrs Ples, Lucy, Little Foot, Dear Boy, and the rest of 'our' fossils — have never been found." (10)

The next meeting points or rendezvous are with the Gorillas, orangutans, gibbons, old world monkeys, new world monkeys, tarsiers, lemurs and bushbabies, colugos and tree shrews and rodents and rabbits to name the first 10 rendezvous with us, the modern humans. By the time our ancestors meet the ancestors of rodents (rats) and rabbits, we have travelled back-

ward in our evolutionary journey some 75 million years.

The final rendezvous in Dawkins book is numbered 39 and is with the Eubacteria. Eubacteria could be either a Gram-positive or Gram-negative bacteria genus in the family Eubacteriaceae. These bacteria are characterized by a rigid cell wall. They may either be motile or non-motile. If motile, they have a flagellum.

The unicellular organisms multiplied or reproduced asexually. When sexual multiplication first happened the two spouses came from the same unicellular organism, as if the organism gave rise to its own mate. This is described in the Holy Quran at least three times. In the past when biology was not well understood, the Muslim scholars understood these verses to mean that grandmother Eve came from the rib of the prophet Adam, as described in the Bible. Many a medieval scholars of Islam, who are still not well informed, continue to maintain the same view and understand the verses that follow as one human coming from the rib of another. However, any one with very basic knowledge of biology and evolution, which is every good high school student in the West, would think of the idea of Eve coming from the rib of Adam, as preposterous. The first of these three verses is none other than the one that is recited whenever a marriage is being conducted in the Islamic tradition:



Bacteria

"O ye people! fear your Lord, Who created you from a single soul and created therefrom its mate, and from them twain spread many men and women; and fear Allah, in Whose name you appeal to one another, and fear Him particularly respecting ties of relationship. Indeed, Allah watches over you." (12)

There is a subtle hint in the Arabic of this verse that it is not applicable to Adam and Eve and indeed is talking about the stage of asexual to sexual multiplication. The pronoun used for the mother organism from which the mate came is a female and not a male, contrary to what the description should be if Eve came from the rib of Adam.

The other two verses with the same theme are:

"He it is Who has created you from a single soul, and made therefrom its mate, that he might find comfort in her. And when he knows her, she bears a light burden, and goes about with it. And when she grows heavy, they both pray to Allah, their Lord, saying: 'If Thou give us a good child, we will surely be of the thankful.'" (13)

And:

"And He it is Who has produced you from a single person and there is for you a home and a lodging. We have explained the Signs in detail for a people who understand." (14)

The All Knowing God of Islam and the Quran knows everything about the past and the future and cannot say anything in the Holy Quran that is against the well-established facts of evolution on our planet earth over the last 4 billion years.

Dr. Zia H. Shah is the Chief Editor of the Muslim Times with 41,000 followers in Twitter; has authored 400 articles on Religion, Secularism and Religion and Science.

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NEWS, VIEWS, & REVIEWS



Pope: Women will be banned from priesthood forever

The Catholic Church's ban on female priests will stand forever, Pope Francis said Tuesday.

The pontiff made the declaration in response to a female reporter asking whether he thought women would one day serve as Catholic priests and bishops, noting the head of Sweden's Lutheran Church whom Francis met on his trip there is a woman.

"St. Pope John Paul II had the last clear word on this and it stands," Francis said during a news conference aboard the papal plane on the flight back to Rome, according to Reuters.

The reporter then asked "Forever, forever? Never, never?" "If we read carefully the declaration by St. John Paul II, it is going in that direction," the pope responded.

Pope John Paul II, in an Apostolic letter written in 1994, wrote that despite the church's long history of male-only priests, "in some places it is nonetheless considered open to debate." Not so, wrote the pope who died in 2005 and was canonized a saint in 2014.

"Wherefore, in order that all doubt may be removed regarding a matter of great importance, a matter which pertains to the Church's divine constitution itself, in virtue of my ministry of confirming the brethren, I declare that the Church has no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women and that this judgment is to be definitively held by all the Church's faithful," John Paul II wrote.



Pope Francis

Source: USA Today, By John Bacon

Is God really dead? How Britain lost faith in the church

RNS
RELIGION NEWS SERVICE

Fifty years ago, on April 8, 1966, a Time magazine cover asked just that question.

The same could be asked in Britain today.

The Church of England recently announced it was considering dropping the requirement for weekly church services in parish churches in the wake of dwindling attendance that show no sign of bouncing back for at least a generation. Low church attendance is frequently in the news, but looking deeper into the phenomenon reveals what the underlying issues really are.

The Church of England has been suffering from a conflict of values with its members, especially the under-25s. Recent debates around same-sex marriage, abortion and female bishops, have threatened to split the church and alienate a significant proportion of its congregation. Throughout ongoing controversies, including the lack of support for policies on women, the Church of England has come across as outdated.

The situation has been exacerbated by the comments of senior church figures such as the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, who lamented earlier this year that “the culture [is] becoming anti-Christian, whether it is on matters of sexual morality, or the care for people at the beginning or end of life. It is easy to paint a very gloomy picture.”

At the same time, the Church of England – as well as the Catholic Church – is still reeling from allegations and legal settlements related to accusations of sexual abuse. Indeed, many have abandoned Catholicism as a result of what many perceive to be the church’s inadequate response to that systemic problem.

God is no longer ‘in our image’

As Church of England congregations age and young people reject organized religion, the atrophy of traditional parish churches seems to be unrelenting.

In contrast, attendance at Evangelical and Pentecostal churches has increased over the last several decades. Between 2015 and 2013, attendance in London Pentecostal churches increased by 50 percent. This is at odds with Church of England attendance, which has gone down by 9



percent over the same period. While many Anglican churches have made an effort to welcome new immigrants and support refugees, the message has not been unequivocally supportive; evangelical churches are more highly regarded by Christians who have recently arrived in the U.K.

Prominent Conservative Party leaders, including Theresa May and David Cameron, and most recently, the aptly-named Tory councilor Christian Holliday, whose policies have been criticized as not welcoming of new arrivals to the U.K, are perhaps some of the more visible representatives of traditional churchgoers. In contrast, the rise of charismatic church attendance by recent arrivals to the U.K illustrates that these communities offer something the Church of England does not.

While the demographics of church attendance have shifted over the past few decades, as indeed they have since Christianity first emerged as a religion in its own right, interest in religion itself has increased sharply. For instance, religion is the fastest-growing A-level subject in all of the humanities, social sciences, and arts, increasing a whopping 110 percent since 2003.

This is despite growing anxiety about how to teach religion in schools, some of which has resulted in backwards curriculum redesign or ineffective teaching that may be discouraging students from learning more about the subject. ‘Believing without belonging’

It's not quite true to say, then, that young people are becoming more secular – interest in faith, belief and spirituality seems to be on the increase. Grace Davie's concept of "believing without belonging" might be a more useful way to understand young people's apparent rejection of the church.

In the nineties, Davie, a sociologist of religion, coined the phrase to describe the shifting nature of religiosity from communal and active to individual and inactive. She argued that religious believing in the UK has become detached from religious belonging, which reflects a wider social shift to individualism. Young people's "rejection" of the church, then, could be both a political response to the misogyny and homophobia displayed during church debates over the last few years, and a reflection of the "implicit religion of the British people" by which belief in a Christian God doesn't equate to church attendance.

The idea of the UK as a Christian nation has been challenged in recent years. What is clear, however, is that religion is even more a factor in public life and personal interest than it ever has been.

More people than ever are choosing to learn about religion and what it means for a world that increasingly believes itself to be secular. This challenges society to reflect on how it defines religious literacy – and that is a good thing. God, then, isn't dead. People are just looking for him in a different way.

(Katie Edwards is director SIIBS, University of Sheffield, and Meredith J C Warren is lecturer in Biblical and Religious Studies, University of Sheffield. This article was originally published on The Conversation.



Ryan White , Reporter/Producer

The world's most prominent Muslim leader, the Caliph, His Holiness, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, says spreading the true message of Islam is the best way to thwart Islamophobia.

Speaking in Calgary on Wednesday afternoon, the Caliph says there is little to fear from the results of Tuesday's voting in the United States and the selection of Donald Trump as the president-elect.

"I have always said that even if he wins, he will never implement his policies," said the Caliph. "What he was saying was only election-campaign tactics."

"His attitude has completely changed overnight. Yesterday he was saying that Hillary should be put behind bars and she's this and that. Today he has said that Hillary Clinton is an asset to the country and should be regarded as an asset to the country. It shows that he has changed somehow."



The Caliph does not foresee the United States closing its borders to all practicing Muslims.

"I don't think it's wishful thinking, I don't think any government or any sane person could ever take this step." Should the next president of the United States extend an invitation, the Caliph says he would gladly accept but would allow Trump's approach to determine the topics of conversation.

The Caliph does not expect an increase in anti-Muslim activity to follow Trump's victory. "We are more scared than what is (actually) going to happen."

His Holiness says the true and peaceful message of Islam of love, peace and harmony is the best approach when facing intolerance.

"If you spread the true message of Islam, which we Ahmadiyya's have been doing, this is the only thing that we can do to remove the fear, the islamophobia, from the minds of the people of the western world."

The Caliph is scheduled to leave on Sunday, but his last public event will be the peace conference on Friday.

poetry CORNER

Excellence of the Holy Quran

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, Promised Messiah and Mahdi (as)

Gratitude to noble Lord is beyond expression
Whose own word bestowed on us His recognition

Light of insight that we acquire from this scripture
Thousand suns cannot attain this illumination

Our hearts and bosoms were purified by it
He Himself has become mirror for His reflection

He granted fruit of insight to the tree of heart
Rid all chests of doubt each heart met transformation

Image of God has been manifested by it
Fruitless remained satan's deceit and suspicion

The path that makes visible the Lord of majesty
The path that will make the heart free of pollution

The path that will draw in long lost beloved friend
The path that will serve us pure faith's intoxication

The path that is firm proof about His existence
The path that is a solid plan for His attention

He has shown that very path to each and everyone
Completely effaced all doubt and reservation

Sorrow that was in bosoms has melted away
Darkness that was in hearts became illumination

The era of autumn has transformed into spring
Gentle breeze is blowing with Beloved's attention

Translated by Shazia Sohail



Women's Space

Gender Equity in Islam: Keeping Balance in Gender Roles

Attiya Ghani

Islam is based on laws of peace, harmony, equality, and justice for all. Allah, the All Knowing, created this universe and endowed us with Islam as guidance, as a system of values, and a complete code of life and conduct.

Islamic justice denotes equality. It also means giving others equal and fair treatment. Islam bestows on woman all the political, social and spiritual rights, which man enjoys. Regarding such rights the Holy Qur'an states:

"Surely, men who submit themselves to God and women who submit themselves to Him, and believing men and believing women, and obedient men and obedient women and truthful men and truthful women, and men steadfast in their faith and steadfast women, and men who are humble and women who are humble, and men who give alms and women who give alms, and men who fast and women who fast, and men who guard their chastity and women who guard their chastity, and men who remember Allah much and women who remember Him — Allah has prepared for all of them forgiveness and a great reward."(1)

This verse of the Holy Qur'an embodies a most effective repudiation of the charge that Islam accords a lower status to women. According to the Holy Qur'an, God has grouped the characteristics of those men and women whom He has prepared to forgive on the Day of Judgment. They are submis-

sive, truthful, righteous, humble, sacrificing, and modest and remember God. This means that every righteous person male or female should have these qualities to get the reward of forgiveness.

Muslim women stand on the same level with men, and can attain to all those spiritual heights to which men can attain and enjoy all those spiritual rights which men enjoy. 1500 years ago, our beloved Prophet Mohammad (sa) declared that all men are created equal. In his Farewell Sermon given at the final pilgrimage, Prophet Muhammad (sa) said:

"... Even as the fingers of the two hands are equal, so are human beings equal to one another. No one has any rights, any superiority to claim over another. You are as brothers. O men, your God is One and your ancestor is one. An Arab holds no superiority over a non-Arab, nor a White over a Black person, nor vice-versa, but only to the extent to which he discharges his responsibility to God and man. Only the God-fearing people merit a preference with God."(2)

Every human being has to discharge duties to God and duties to mankind, and these responsibilities and rewards are same regardless of gender. In support of equality of men and women, the Qur'an further states:

"But whoso does good works, whether male or female, and is a believer, such shall enter Heaven, and shall not be wronged even as much as the little hollow in the back of a date-stone."(3) The verse places men and women on the same level so far as their works and rewards are concerned. Both are entitled to an exceptional reward if they do good works.

Many non-Muslims seem to have trouble in under-

standing the significance of several Islamic teachings such as, chastity and modesty which are prescribed for both men and women equally in order to maintain a pure society. The Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa) exhorted his followers to observe modesty. He said: "Be chaste and your women will be chaste."(4)

It is clear from this hadith that Islam demands a purely religious and moral society in which there would be no immorality. The main object of Islam is that purity and piety which should be imbibed in the practice of Muslim to such an extent that their characters would become impeccable and faultless.

Islam prohibits unchaste behavior and commands us to avoid such activities and company which can lead us to immodest acts. Regarding this God, the Almighty states: "Follow not the footsteps of Satan; surely, he is your open enemy."(5) Therefore, Islam puts high emphasis on chastity for both the genders because our kind Lord wants to protect us from indecency and unchaste thoughts.



appearance or sphere of their activities, which in turn make their roles different. It is this difference in roles and responsibilities of both the sexes that has mistakenly, or perhaps deliberately, been misunderstood by hostile critics of Islam as implying a lower status of women.

A major institution of society is marriage about which Islam gives clear instructions. The Holy Qur'an states:

"...And they (the women) have rights similar to those (of men) over them in equity; but men have a degree of advantage above them. And Allah is Mighty and Wise."(6)

The verse clearly indicates that personal rights of husband and wife are equal but men have a supervisory authority on account of the physical advantage they possess and the financial responsibility they have for providing for the household. Man being the bread winner of the household does not mean that he is superior to woman and woman being the caregiver of the children does not mean that she is inferior to man. It is just about the division of responsibilities for the optimum functioning of the system which in this case is the family unit.

Regarding the role of husbands, the Holy Qur'an states:

"Men are guardians over women because Allah has made some of them excel others, and because men spend on them of their wealth. So virtuous women are obedient, and guard the secrets of their husband with Allah's protection..."(7) So, Islamic justice creates a sense of equilibrium in the distribution of rights and responsibilities but they are not identical.

The Holy Qur'an contains hundreds of teachings which apply to both men and women alike. The moral, spiritual and economic equality of men and women as propagated by Islam is undeniable. The only difference described is either their physical

Islam does not only give equal rights to women but actually goes one step ahead by putting the financial responsibility of the household on the husband's shoulders allowing the wife to fulfill the challenging obligation of the upbringing of children so that they can become better members of the society.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa), fourteen centuries ago assured the mothers, wives, and daughters of Islam a rank and dignity not yet generally accorded to women by the laws of the West. According to a leading psychiatrist, Dr. Judith Mohring, women in their 30's and 40's are experiencing increasing degree of anxiety, depression, and stress while trying to manage their careers, commute, family, and children. Research shows that in the Western societies, the work stress rate among women has jumped 18 per cent in the last four years for those between thirty to forty years of age. According to data reported by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), women between the ages of 35 and 44 years in Britain have a 67 percent greater likelihood of suffering from work-related stress than similar aged men.(8)

A principle of change which has been discovered in the twenty-first century by the West was revealed in the Holy Qur'an fourteen hundred years ago by God, the Wise. Keeping this wisdom in view how then can one accuse that Islam is unjust to a Muslim woman whose foremost duty is the moral upbringing of her own children?

Following commandment of God has many positive meanings including prosperity, success, safety, security, happiness and tranquility. Regarding this Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad (aba) said:

"Always remember that God has not given a single command without reason or purpose. Every command of Allah is a means of benefit to the individual and to the society. Allah's commands are a means of protection from the many dangers and obstacles that are placed in front of us in this life, and are also a means of making sure we attain the very best rewards and blessings in the Hereafter." (9)

As Ahmadi Muslims it is our duty to portray the true status of women in Islam. We should seek nearness to God by grasping the beautiful teachings of the Holy Qur'an. At the UK National conference for the Women's Auxiliary of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad (aba) said the following in his address:

"As members of Lajna Imaillah, it is particularly your responsibility to wash away the unjust allegation that, God forbid, Islam advocates the harsh or cruel treatment of women."(10)

The Qur'an throws light upon science, history, economics and so much more. It teaches us about human rights – such as the rights of women, the rights of men, rights of the poor and deprived and the rights of children. The Qur'an educates us about family matters and about fulfilling the rights of one another. In truth, all types of knowledge are contained within the Holy Qur'an.



Conclusion

Dignity and true freedom of a woman lie in modesty. Differences between man and woman do exist. Equality, however, is not in totality of constitution. Equality is only in relative terms of rights. Hence, Islam knows no difference between a man's right and a woman's right. However, they would, of course, be related to their constitution as well. God only knows how He has created mankind so wherever we discover any difference in teaching we will always find it without fail, without exception, in that the difference is directly related to the constitutional differences, not otherwise.

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FROM THE ARCHIVE

(Muslim Sunrise, Vol. XII, Third Quarter, 1940, No. 4)

How Can Mankind Be Saved From Destruction?

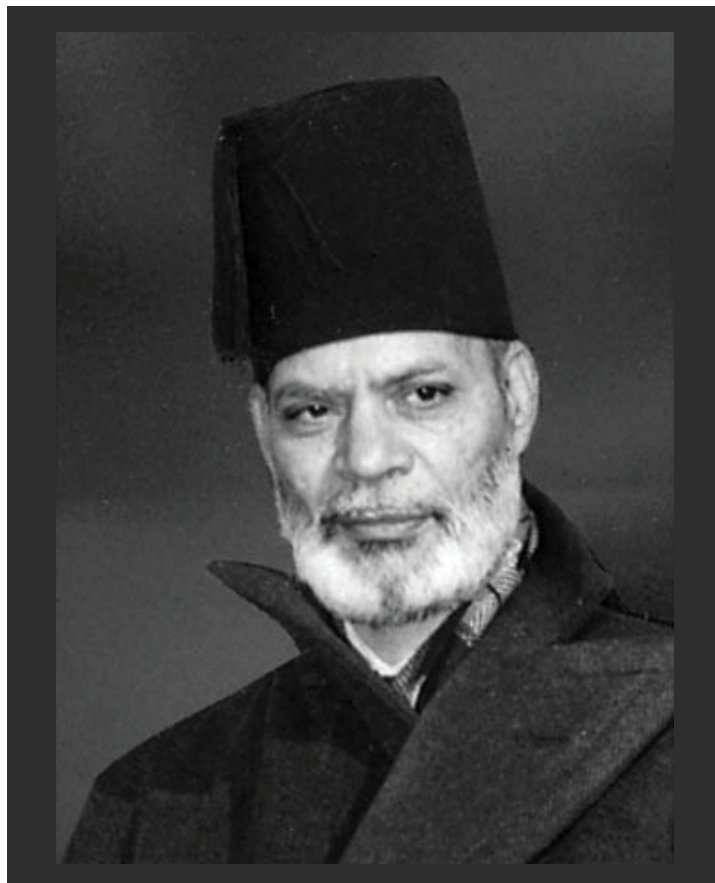
Sir Muhammad Zafrulla Khan

Just think, for a moment, of the causes that have led to the state in which mankind finds itself today. Nations which regard themselves as standard bearers of culture and civilization are fighting each other like waves of the sea in a storm. A trumpet has been blown and millions of men have come out to destroy each other and to let loose a hell, the very idea of which is terrifying. Men and all they possess are being consumed in this hell. Why has all this happened? Because men have turned their thoughts away from their Creator and have become so engrossed in worldly attractions and so proud of their achievements and their skill that they have no time to pay any heed to the Almighty. It is as if they have dethroned the All-Powerful and the All-Merciful God and put their fellow men in His place. It was only then that God was moved to wrath and only then that the products of human skill, which were a source of pride to men, became the engine of their own destruction.

Let him that has ears hear that God is in supreme anger and the real service we can do for the whole mankind in this hour of common need is to seek purity and virtue in our ideas, desires, ambitions, and actions and eschew all those things which are displeasing to God. We should live our lives in such a way that He may look at us again with kindness that His wrath may subside, so that the world may be restored to the paths of faith and peace.

It is necessary that we keep this ideal in view in every hour and in every activity of our lives. We should give up our selfish and evil ways and turn our steps towards the path of virtue and our thoughts towards God. We

should bow before Him in all humility and repent. We should seek His favor and all our actions should be directed towards that end. We should serve God alone and obey His will and should dissociate ourselves entirely from all that is ungodly in human ambitions and desires, and turn away completely from those who try to appropriate to themselves the attributes of God so that there may be peace between God and man, and the future generations of mankind may be saved from destruction, and the Will of God be supreme on earth as it is in heaven.





Questions & Answers

What is the Concept of the Soul in Islam?

Allah Almighty says in the Holy Qur'an: "And they ask you concerning the soul. Say, 'The soul is by the command of my Lord; and of the knowledge thereof you have been given but a little.'" (The Holy Qur'an, 17:86)

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, the Promised Messiah and the Mahdi (as), writes about the soul: "It is absolutely true that the soul is a fine light which is developed inside the body and is nurtured in the womb. To begin with, it is hidden and imperceptible and later it is made manifest. From the very beginning its essence is present in the sperm. It is related to the sperm in a mysterious manner by the design and command and Will of God. It is a bright and illumined quality of the sperm. It cannot be said that it is a part of the sperm as matter is a part of matter, nor can it be said that it comes from outside or falls upon the earth and get mixed with the matter of the sperm. It is latent in the sperm as fire is latent in the flint. The Word of God does not mean that the soul descends from Heaven as a separate entity or falls upon the earth from the atmosphere and then by chance gets mixed with the sperm and enters the womb with it. There is no basis for such a notion. The law of nature rejects it. We observe daily that thousands of insects infect impure and stale foods and are generated in unwashed wounds. Dirty linen secretes hundreds of lice and all sorts of worms are generated. Inside a person's stomach. It cannot be said that all these come from outside or

can be observed as descending from Heaven. The truth is that the soul is developed in the body, and this also proves that it is created and is not self-sufficient.

The design of the Almighty, who has created the soul from the body, with His Perfect Power appears to be that the second birth of the soul should also take place through this body. The movements of the soul follow the movements of the body. If the body is drawn in a particular direction the soul automatically follows it. It is, therefore, a function of the Book of God to direct itself to the natural state of man. That is why the Holy Qur'an pays so much attention to the reform of the natural state of man and gives directions regarding each of his actions, his laughing, weeping, eating, clothing, sleeping, speaking, keeping silent, marrying, remaining celibate, walking, standing still, outward cleanliness, bathing, submitting to a discipline in health and in illness, etc. It affirms that man's physical condition affects his spiritual condition deeply."

(The Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam. Pp. 7-8, Published 1996)

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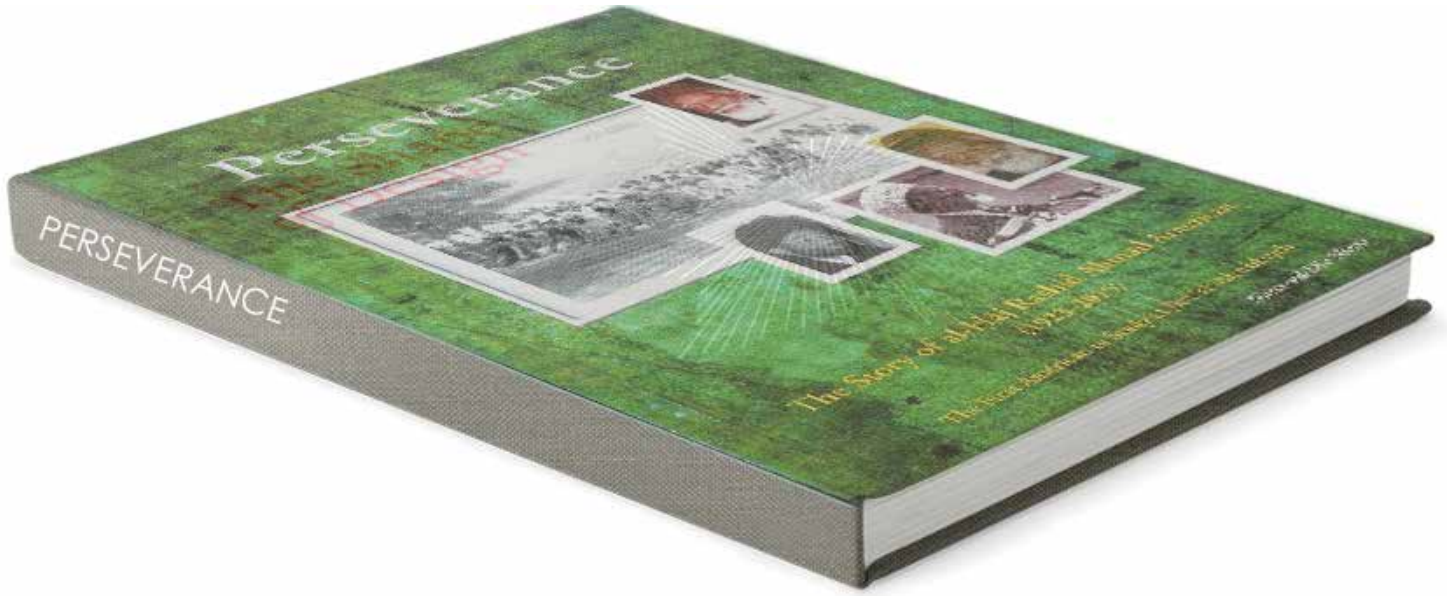


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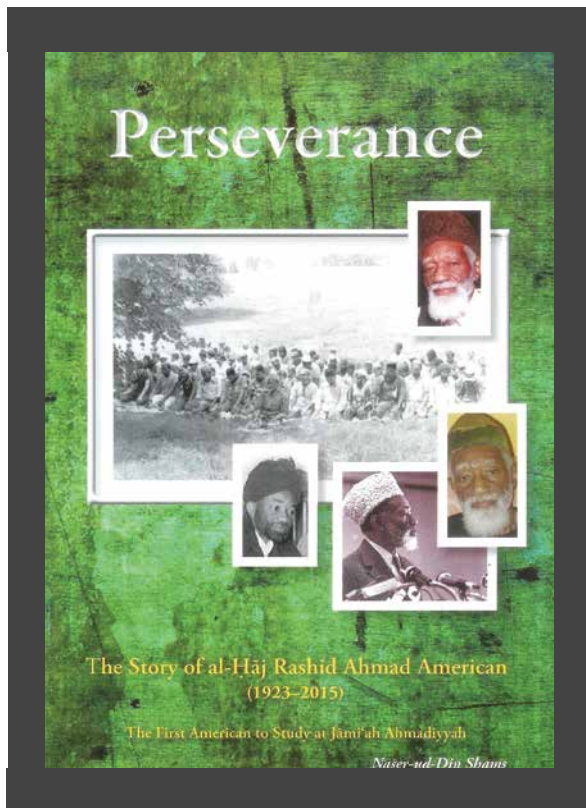
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